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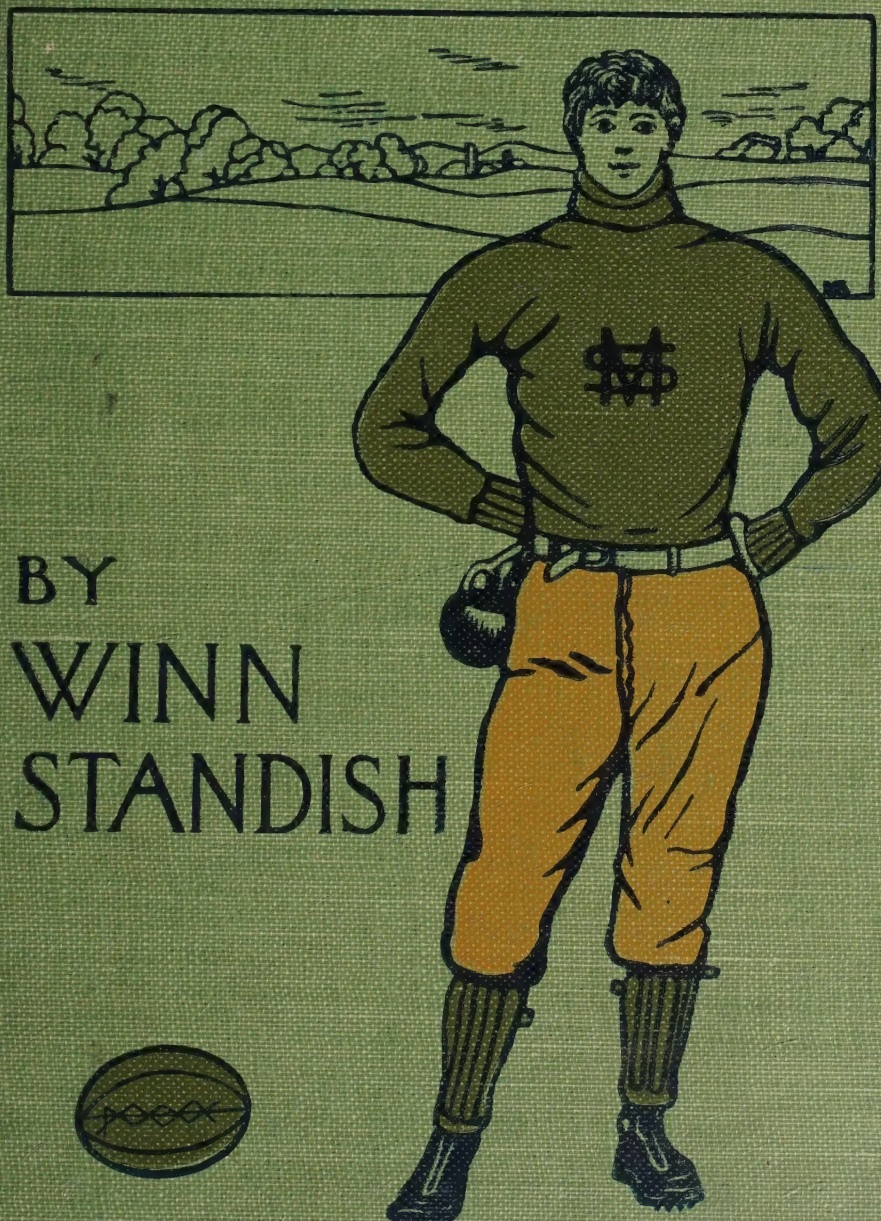

BY

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Dec 25, 1924

CAPTAIN JACK LORIMER

THE

JACK LORIMER SERIES

By WINN STANDISH

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CAPTAIN JACK LORIMER

THE JACK LORIMER SERIES

CAPTAIN JACK LORIMER

OR

The Young Athletes of Millvale High

By WINN STANDISH

AUTHOR OF

"Jack Lorimer's Champions," "Jack Lorimer's Holidays," "Jack Lorimer's Substitute," "Jack Lorimer, Freshman."

A. L. BURT COMPANY

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To Jack Hyde

CAPTAIN JACK'S FIRST FRIEND

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In offering the present volume, "Captain Jack Lorimer; or, The Young Athletes of Millvale High," to the boys and girls of America, the author wishes to express his acknowledgments to *The Boston Sunday Herald,* in which Captain Jack made his first appearance.

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CAPTAIN JACK LORIMER

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO WHO WERE NOT WANTED

THEY came; they went; that was all there was to say about it.

Swiftly and in silence the incident passed. Six or eight boys were gathered on the steps of the south front of the Millvale High School. Two boys came around the corner of the building. They and the group stared at each other an instant, then the two retreated. Somebody whistled softly as they went: "I Don't Care if You Never Come Back." And then Jack Lorimer spoke.

"Oh, give the lads a chance!" Jack said.

He smiled as he said it; but every one of his companions — clean-cut, high-spirited fellows, ranging in age from sixteen to eighteen, and over — knew that Jack was in earnest. And they were sorry, for "giving the lads a chance" meant taking into their eleven Rel Webb, a boy none of them liked, and one who was as different from them as a boy could be.

Nobody answered for a minute. Tom Bell found his voice first. "Yes, I suppose we'd have to take in his chum, too," he said. "But then, Lem Saunders is a good runner. Eh, Terry?"

"Terry thumped him, yesterday," somebody explained for Jack's benefit.

"That so, Terry?"

The lad called Terry wrinkled up his nose in a funny way he had, and glanced around the group with a roguish smile.

"What's a teeny-weeny punch, between friends?" he said. "Sure 'twas only a love-lap, anyhow. He was worrying the little Sargent boy, just out of bed from a fever, as everybody knows, and I took Sargent's part because he couldn't defend himself. I'd do it again, too. But I'll agree to forget it if Lem will."

"It isn't so easy to forget one of your love-laps," Sewall Ford commented, and the boys laughed.

But with that the matter dropped. It was time to settle the question they had been discussing, that of admitting Orello ("Rel") Webb and his crony, Lem Saunders, to the high school football team.

Jack Lorimer straightened his strong figure, and his bright eyes flashed from one to another.

"I don't like the idea any better than you do, fellows," he began, "but I see reasons for inviting Rel and Lem to join us. First place you must remember I'm only a junior —"

"You're the best all-round athlete in the school,

just the same, and everybody knows it!" Terry McGrady muttered.

"And if I deprive seniors of the chance to play, it might make hard feeling between the classes," Jack finished. "Another thing, Rel's heavy enough to block a tackle or make one, and, as you say, Lem's a good runner. Then again, Rel's father is on the school committee. School committees have a trick of turning rusty about school athletic teams, and it may be handy to have a friend at court. And don't forget," Jack ended, "that Mr. Webb owns a big lot on Main Street extension. We shall need it, too."

"Why, what's the matter with old Lanard's field?" several asked at once.

"Nothing, except that he won't have it used for athletics any longer," Jack replied. "I saw him this morning. The field is no great distance from his house, and he says he 'can't stand it to have a passel of boys yellin' and cahootin' around there.' When the wind's southwest, he says, he and his 'old woman' can't hear themselves think, there's such a racket. I told him we'd try to be quiet, but he just grinned and said: 'No, I'm a-gettin' old, and I've j'ined the church and promised to stop swearin', so I can't take chances on ye!' Looks to me as if we'd have to use the Webb lot!"

"Better not let it get out that Rel — or his father — has any such hold on us," Tom Bell sug-

gested. "If Rel takes it into his head that we need something of his, he'll be a — a worse dose than he is now."

"Oh, bluff him, bluff him, and it'll be all right." This was Terry McGrady's easy advice. "Sure he's always hunting trouble, but he loses no time crawling out after he's found it."

"And Lem's a bigger sneak than he is," added Sewall Ford. "Ain't that right, Captain Jack?"

Jack Lorimer hesitated. He knew the boys would follow his lead, and he hardly knew how to put his wishes into words, for he had a manly fellow's natural dislike of "preachiness," and yet he thought he ought to preach a little. His bronzed cheek flushed, and he shoved his hands deep into his pockets as if to get a grip on himself; but the words would not come.

Terry McGrady's eyes twinkled. "Call names to both of 'em, Jack!" he cried. "'Twill ease your mind. I'll lend you the names to call, if you want. And if you're afraid of Rel and Lem," he went on, grinning broadly, "you being only five feet nine, and weighing only a hundred and forty-five, I'll back you up!"

Jack laughed. Then he faced the others seriously. The joke had given him an opening.

"Say, fellows," he began, "why not stop calling names for awhile, and try to be friendly? We've sort of steered clear of Rel and Lem, and p'r'aps they've only been fighting back the best way

they knew how. I say, if we've got to have 'em on the team, let bygones be bygones, and see if they won't appreciate being used like — like ourselves!" He cast a frank, appealing glance around.

Terry McGrady made a wry face and gulped hard. "I've swallowed 'em, Jack," he said. "'Tis to please you, mind, and not because I like the taste of the brutes." The others nodded.

"We've got a chance to practise being good, right now," muttered Tom Bell, rather grimly. "Talk of the devil — here they come again."

Rel Webb was tall and plump. Lem Saunders was tall and thin. Rel was a good deal of a dandy, carrying a little cane and wearing eye-glasses because he thought they were "becoming." Lem's clothing was good enough, but he looked shabby by contrast. Rel swaggered, and Lem was shifty-eyed and slinking. Yet the two were curiously alike in spite of all the differences — alike in disposition.

They proved it by the way they played into each other's hands. Unpopular as they knew they were, they had hung around the building this afternoon when the school athletes were planning the season, on the chance of getting on the football team. But when they came around the corner for the second time a stranger would have said that they were too busy to have any scheme on foot. They were talking so hard that they had let their cigarettes

go out. In fact, they did not seem to notice the other boys until Jack Lorimer hailed them.

"Hello, fellows!" he said, pleasantly. "Glad to have you join us, if you feel like cutting out the smokes and buckling down to good, hard work for the glory of Millvale High!"

Rel flicked the ash from the end of his dead cigarette. "Football?" he asked in an indifferent way, as if he did not know what was up and cared little.

"Sure!"

Rel turned to his companion. "What do you say, Lem?"

"Oh, I don't mind."

"All right. You're on. What positions?"

"You and Tom Bell for the ends, I guess. Lem's pretty light, but I think we can back him up so that we can use him somewhere."

There was no objection. The newcomers tossed away their cigarettes, as if to show they meant business, and came a little nearer. "What's the ante?" Rel asked, all at once.

"Eh?"

"How much are the members of the team chipping in for expenses?"

"Oh, the school backs us up pretty well, you know — and we're not millionaires."

"Put down twenty dollars for Lem and me."

CHAPTER II.

WAKING UP THE WRONG CUSTOMER

REL spoke in his most magnificent manner. But somehow he did not seem to create the sensation he had counted upon. Captain Jack said, "That's very generous," but he was quite calm about it. Rel looked sour. He felt better when Jack added:

"By the way, Rel, what's the chance of our getting the use of your father's big lot on Main Street extension? Lanard's field is pretty far out, you know, and we've been saying it might be a good scheme to get nearer town. What's your idea? If it strikes you the same way, and if you could fix it up for us, you'd be doing the team a good turn, I think."

"I guess that'll be all right," Rel answered. Then an idea seemed to strike him, and he laughed disagreeably. "I know what father'll say, though, when I ask him," he added. "He'll say, 'Where do you come in? What do you get out of this?' Father's an attorney, you know."

"'Twould be a sad thing, wouldn't it, if he was only a lawyer!" Terry muttered. Jack hushed him with a glance.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Well — who's going to be field captain?"

"The quarter is always the field captain, and Terry plays quarter," Jack answered.

"Who made it so?"

"The boss said so — Captain Jack!" Terry put in hotly. He jumped to his feet and doubled his fists. But Rel pretended not to see these warlike preparations.

"Huh!" he said. "When do you want to have first practice? To-morrow afternoon? Well, it'll be safe to go to father's lot, I guess. Come on, Lem," and with a nod to the group the two walked away.

"Thought if he did something to help the eleven he ought to have an office," Tom Bell snorted in disgust.

"Wish he was on a team against us, and I had a chance to tackle him!" Sewall Ford added. He jumped for Terry as he spoke, took him unawares, and, tackling low, threw him over his head into Jack's arms. But even as he landed Terry hooked one foot around Ford's ankle and laid him on his back.

"Good play, boys, all but the tripping!" Jack cried. "Only you don't want to practise on the bricks. Take care of your arms and legs till to-morrow, and then we'll get out on Webb's lot and give the subs a chance to break a few." And with that Jack said good night and started off by him-

self. He had a few errands to do — and at this time of day there was a chance of meeting May Roxton somewhere along his road.

It happened as he hoped. He had just finished his errands and turned homeward when May, a schoolmate in Millvale High, came out of a house he had had his eye upon, and he hastened his steps and overtook her. He wanted to tell her that she looked as bright and beautiful as the September day — and that would have been the truth. But May's blue eyes could light up with roguish amusement, and her rosy lips could say mischievous things, and Jack was a little shy of paying open compliments, which sometimes seemed to miss the mark. So all he did was to lift his cap and fall into step.

"Music lesson?" he asked.

"Smart boy! You've guessed it," May answered, with a laughing glance at the music-roll she held. "Football?" she asked, in her turn.

"Just football talk to-day. Hope we can get in a little practice to-morrow."

"Have you taken in Webb and Saunders, as you thought you might?"

Jack nodded.

"Be careful of them, Jack," May said, earnestly. "They're horrid, Rel Webb especially. He doesn't like you because he knows that — that everybody does."

"'Everybody' mean you?" Jack interrupted.

"I never said I liked you, did I?" May retorted, tossing her head, but blushing a little. "I'm warning you that Rel and Lem would serve you a mean trick if they ever get a chance."

"Yes, if," laughed Jack. As he spoke he glanced ahead and to one side, where a heap of building materials had been placed for a new house. "Hello!" he cried. "There they are now. Looks as though somebody was having a scrap."

They walked a few steps farther. Jack grasped the situation quickly.

"See here, May, I'm going to butt in!" he exclaimed. "Those two cowards have set on one man, and a two-to-one fight doesn't go down with me — not if the two were my brothers!"

"I should think Lem Saunders might have got all the fighting he wanted yesterday, when Terry McGrady drove him away from little Sargent," May said, scornfully. "I don't blame you, Jack. Girls don't fight, you know, but if they did, I'd fight for fair play every time!"

With a nod and a smile that any lad in Millvale would have given his ears to win, she turned away and crossed the street. Jack ran forward.

The young fellow who was defending himself against two was a stranger to Jack. He was roughly dressed and looked as though he knew what hard work meant. But it was his honest face that Jack looked at, and the battle he was putting up made Jack feel like clapping his hands.

Rel was doing most of the fighting for the other side, but Lem was rushing in to worry the stranger, when he saw an opening, — shrewdly, too. When he had made his feint or landed his blow he dodged back out of reach, so that Rel, who had a fine black eye to show already, caught most of the stranger's fistic attentions. But Webb was standing up to it well, and he and his antagonist seemed pretty evenly matched. "Let the best man win" was the rule that fitted the case, and Jack was bound to enforce it.

"Get back out of that, Lem, or you'll have me to fight!" Jack yelled, as he approached.

Saunders was taken by surprise. He jumped, half-turned, and, stumbling over a joist, fell heavily.

Rel was startled, too, and dropped his guard. But the stranger was attending strictly to business and a chance like this was not to be neglected. He threw his whole weight into a blow that caught Rel squarely in the mouth and sent him to the earth.

"Much obliged, friend," the stranger said, as he turned to Jack with a smile. "I could 'a' licked 'em both, give me time enough, but two to one ain't exactly square.

"Mind you, I wasn't huntin' trouble," he went on. "I just asked this feller" — he pointed to Rel — "asked him to tell me the time, because I was afraid I was late for the night-shift. I work in the Eagle Mills, and my name's Hawkins. Well,

he gave me a slurrin' answer, and I told him I'd asked him a civil question and expected to be treated like a gentleman, and he said I wasn't a gentleman, only a hobo, and so, one word bringin' on another, pretty soon I had both of 'em on my back.

"But, say," Hawkins added, motioning toward Lem, who had opened his eyes but made no movement to get up, "maybe this one bumped his head, or somethin', when he fell down. Feel anything bust, young feller?" he asked Lem.

"Shoulder," Lem answered, feebly.

Jack passed his hand over Saunders's body and arms.

"Collar-bone broken, I guess," he said. "I'll get a carriage and send him home."

"Well, I'll go along to work," said Hawkins, as he took up his coat and dinner-pail. "I've told you who I am. I'd like to hear how he comes out, and if they want to make any fuss about this — well, you know where to find me."

"If they take my advice they'll let bad enough alone," Jack answered, with his eye on Rel. "You've knocked me out of a football player, maybe two, Mr. Hawkins, but I think you served 'em mighty well right."

CHAPTER III.

THE STRAIN OF A BRAVE RESCUE

JACK LORIMER had "guessed it." Lem Saunders's fall had broken his collar-bone.

That simplified things. Jack was not small-minded enough to rejoice in another fellow's misfortune. But now he would be able to put a strong player in the place of a weak one; and there was a chance that, without Lem to back him and egg him on, Rel Webb would find it easier to be decent.

Before he went to bed Captain Jack had picked his new man. He was anxious to settle the matter, and he planned to hurry his morning chores and get to school early next day in season to talk with Horace White, the player he had in mind. But the work seemed to pile up and drag that morning, and he would not neglect it, so when at last he jumped on a car there was an even chance he would be tardy.

He took a front seat, feeling somehow as though that would hasten things. But everything seemed to go wrong that morning. Passengers moved slowly, and wet leaves on the track made the motorman lose time in starting and stopping. Could they

gain a minute or two in going down Shooter's Hill? Jack hoped so.

But when they had rounded a sharp curve and fairly started on the descent he was amazed to see the motorman all at once shut off the current and put on the brake. He looked along the track.

A single glance explained the motorman's desperate haste. Fair in the middle of the track, halfway down the hill, sat a little child, hardly more than a baby, playing with pebbles she picked from the road-bed, and evidently unconscious of her danger.

The brakes buzzed and shrieked, yet as the heavy car lunged downward it seemed to gather speed. The motorman uttered a frantic exclamation. "I can't stop her!" he groaned.

Jack sprang from his seat. There was one chance. He would try it.

With a single bound he was over the dasher and had dropped to the fender. It sank and rebounded under his weight. He threw himself flat and clutched for a finger-hold, that he might not be flung off.

As the car bumped and slid down-hill the lad inched toward the front. He must move cautiously, even though there was no time to spare.

They had almost reached the little one, and she was laughing and holding up her treasures of pretty stones for all to see. Women in the car screamed

and shut their eyes. Some one was praying aloud.

And now — they were upon her. Another instant would witness a life ground out beneath the cruel wheels. His shoulders overhanging the edge, his left hand gripping the holes in the fender, Jack wrenched himself far forward.

His arm shot out. He clutched the baby's dress. With one mighty heave he swung her clear of the ground up to the fender and behind him, safe.

Now at last as they neared the foot of the hill the brakes began to get a purchase. The motorman came to himself and started to throw out sand. The wheels groaned, buzzed slower, and ceased to revolve.

Jack crept backward against the dasher. Willing hands received the baby and helped the lad to rise.

He was faint and sick from the strain on his nerves and the physical strain of the lift. He wanted to crawl into a corner and lie down. He did not want to be made a hero of, and he did not enjoy it to have the passengers trying to shake hands with him and pay him compliments. At the first corner he dropped off the car and limped 'cross lots to school.

It was hard work to study that day, and when recess-time came it was not easy to brace up and talk to the fellows. Rel Webb did not seem to feel very lively, either, though he had had his black eye

painted so that in the right — or wrong — light, it did not show. One or two fellows asked where Lem was, and Jack told them he was laid up from a fall, leaving Rel to tell them the rest if he felt like it.

But Jack aranged to borrow Horace White, the substitute he wanted for Lem's place, and between nine o'clock and closing hour fixed up a lot of other things that had been on his mind. When he left school he charged the other fellows to meet him at Webb's lot at three o'clock.

By that time his right shoulder and side were so lame he could hardly swing his arm, but he said nothing about it. The team knew he had been training, and would not expect him to give any exhibition. He could coach and take things quietly, this first day, making sure everybody knew how to stand properly, start promptly from position, and drop on the ball.

He would get limbered up in the course of the afternoon, he thought. Meantime Terry McGrady, brilliant player and faithful friend, needed only a hint to jump in and help him out. So Captain Jack and Terry put the players through some simple arm and shoulder movements, and then set them to practise starting.

Now this is not so easy as it looks, and the new men soon got confused.

Lined by pairs, behind a mark, each man of a pair had to try by false starts to coax the other

across the line. As it is not a start until both have crossed, the one who steps over first is at a disadvantage. He must return to wait for the other, who at that moment of return would seize the opportunity.

A new man's eyes and mind naturally follow the other fellow's movements. Before one realized it he would twist his body into all kinds of shapes. Then, "On your toes, there!" he would hear from Jack or Terry.

If the beginner was a level-headed fellow, like Will Chapin, he would laugh and try to do better next time. But Rel Webb, who knew better, was continually getting out of position, and then losing his temper when Jack warned him.

"No swearing, Rel!" Jack said, sharply, at last. Rel turned on him.

"Say!" he demanded. "Think you can boss my tongue as well as my arms and legs?"

"You bet I can and will, if you stay on this team," Jack answered, coolly. "We never know who may be in earshot, and there are sure to be girls at the practice games, and profanity or foul language would give the school a black eye. See the point?"

Rel scowled, and said no more. But he put no snap into his practice, and, though Jack did not wonder much, considering the beating of the night before, such an example was bound to be demoralizing. Jack called Terry one side.

"Better send Rel, Sewall Ford, and Matt Janvrin off to one end of the field and set them to handling punts," he advised. "His slack work is liable to upset the fellows we're trying to break in."

Terry nodded. "One way and another, Jack, 'tis a high price we'll pay for the privilege of using Webb's lot and the pleasure of Rel's society."

"What's the matter with him, anyway? All I want is to give him a square deal."

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE NICK OF TIME, A FRIEND

Terry went off to carry out instructions, not stopping to reply. But he and Jack's other friends knew the reason for Rel's crankiness, which Jack was too modest to suspect. Rel was envious and jealous.

Jack was stronger, better-looking, was ahead of Rel in study and sport, and was a general favourite, and Rel hated him for it.

At this very moment Rel was gazing sourly from the farther end of the field and cursing Jack, himself, and everybody else.

"Swelling around over there and doing nothing but give orders!" Rel muttered. "I'd like to make him work, confound him! Never mind, I'll wait till this practice is over and then I'll spring my little surprise and take him down a peg!"

Meanwhile the other fellows had begun to do better. Terry was shaking hands with himself continually over the way they caught on, and Jack was so pleased that after a half-hour or so he had almost forgotten his aching bones.

"Well, it's us on our toes or you on our necks, so we might as well do it right," Dan Bacon said, with a cheerful grin, when Jack expressed his satisfaction.

"You see the theory of it, don't you, boys?" Jack answered. "When you crouch with your weight on your toes, your ankles, back, and shoulders all at an angle to the ground, you're in a position to use your highest resistive power or to apply your power in attack in the shortest possible time. You get leverage, understand? You're like a compressed spring, ready to be released in an instant."

Another thing that pleased Jack was that Rel and his two companions were by no means idle all the time.

Rel could play football when he took a notion, and since the other two fellows knew less than he did, and he had a chance to give orders, he had kept them busy. Jack had had an eye on the trio, and now, as he called them back, he said, cordially:

"Good work, Rel! Wish you'd drop on the ball a few times for the benefit of the awkward squad."

Rel did so — but he made rather a mess of it. Jack shook his head in a good-natured way.

"You try it, Terry," he ordered. "Rel doesn't do it to-day as well as I've seen him.

"Remember," he added to the others, "dropping on the ball doesn't mean just falling down and hugging it in your hands. You want to dive and

gather it in — curl around it, body and legs, like a kitten."

"Let's see you play kitten, captain," sneered Rel.

Jack flushed, but kept his temper. He accepted the challenge, and went through the manœuvre. But he knew he did it clumsily.

"You and I are both pretty stiff this afternoon, Rel," he commented, as he arose from the ground. His lips were white, and he could hardly speak the words, the effort had caused him so much pain. He would have turned away for a minute to try to pull himself together. But Rel had noted his signs of distress and quickly tried to turn the incident to his own purpose.

"You've been breaking training, in spite of all your talk!" he cried. "Look at him, fellows! It's just as father says — the captain and manager ought to be a strong character — a senior, like most of us, and a fellow who has just about got his growth and learned how to take care of himself!"

"Somebody about your size, Rel?" Sewall Ford suggested.

Rel's only answer was to take an envelope out of his pocket and hand it to Tom Bell.

"You're the president of the school athletic association, and that means boss of the football team," he said. "Here's a note father sent you. I'll go home and give you a chance to talk it over. Guess you'll find father's put it pretty straight."

"Sure, if he's as crooked as you are, he couldn't!" Terry McGrady muttered. But Rel paid no heed. He gathered up his street clothes and left the field in what he took to be a dignified manner, while Tom Bell opened the note and read it aloud:

"DEAR SIR: — Accepting my son Orello's view that the Millvale High School football team is officered in a manner calculated to invite disaster, if not discredit, I am regretfully compelled to refuse the use of my lot on Main Street extension, whether for exhibition or practice games, until such time as the eleven is reorganized and placed in more capable hands. Yours truly,

"J. M. WEBB."

As Tom Bell finished he tore the note into little bits and threw them into the air. "That's the way I feel about that, Jack!" he said.

"Same here!" "Me, too!" "Rah for Captain Jack!" "We'll go out of town and hire a field, sooner than play without you!" "Let's chase up Rel and kick him!" "No, let's go and hammer the old man!" "You stay with us, Jack, and we'll stand by you!" "You're all right, Jack!"

Such were some of the shouts that the boys raised as they crowded around to shake hands or slap Jack on the back or punch him in the ribs.

boy-fashion. He was happy and proud, and he had to wink hard to keep his eyelids dry. But he hushed his friends as soon as he could.

"We won't do anything we might be sorry for," he cried. "Just let the whole thing rest, and we'll think it over calmly to-night. Maybe I shall drop out, if Webb seems to mean business, for you can't afford to buck the school committee — "

"We'll buck the whole State of Massachusetts sooner than let you go, Jack," Terry McGrady broke in, and the others roared their approval.

"And you've got to have grounds," Jack ended, calmly. "It looks to me as though this was the only place, since Mr. Lanard — "

"That's my name, and I guess you're the young feller I'm lookin' for!" came a voice that was strange to most of them. The boys faced round.

They had been so absorbed in their talk that they had not seen the approach of the grizzled old fellow who had now seized Jack's hand and was shaking it as though he would never let go. But they soon found out who he was and what he wanted.

"You saved my little Polly's life!" the old man bellowed, tears running down his face. "Out of that whole carful you was the only one that had the brains to see what to do, and the nerve to do it! Ever since I come from town I've been chasin' after ye to find ye and thank ye!

"Say, ain't you boys heard about it?" the old

man demanded, suddenly. "Oh, I know he wouldn't tell ye; he's too fine a feller to crow about himself, but I'll tell ye, by gum!

"My little Polly, my daughter's baby, slipped the house, this mornin', and wandered over to Shooter's Hill. She was playin' in the middle of the car-track when a car comes down the hill lickety-larrup.

"Well, the baby didn't know enough to get out of the way, the motorman couldn't stop his car, and nobody thought of anything to do but Mr. Lorimer here. He drops over the dasher and crawls out on the fender and hangs on with one hand and drags the baby out of danger. Big thing to do? I bate ye!

"Say, Mr. Lorimer, how am I goin' to get square with ye? I told ye you boys couldn't have my field, didn't I? Well, you can have it, and you can do anything you want with it — hold hoss-races, or put up tents and play Injun, or — or sow it to witch-grass, by gum! What say?"

Jack smiled. "It's a very kind offer, Mr. Lanard," he said, "and I feel like accepting it on behalf of the team." Briefly he told of Webb's actions. The old man boiled over.

"Don't ye have nothin' to do with that shyster lawyer, nohow!" he cried. "Get rid of the young one, too. 'Like father, like son,' ye know.

"Tell ye jest what I'll do, boys," he added. "I'll let ye have the field rent free; I'll stand the

cost of fencin' it anyhow ye say, up to three hundred dollars, and if ye want to put up seats or a dressin'-room or any sich contraption, I'll chip in two hundred dollars more!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lanard!" Captain Jack cried, and the boys gave them with a will. The old man winked at his young friends.

"I s'pose it would sort o' stick in your throats if I asked ye to give three cheers for Jack Lorimer, wouldn't it?" he said, slyly.

"Sure we're cheering Jack all the time!" Terry McGrady answered, as he made ready to lead. "We're near killed with the monotony of it. So this time we'll be making a change. Never mind that he's captain and manager, we'll cheer him as the team's mascot!"

It did really seem that Jack was a luck bringer and "everything was lovely." And yet there was more trouble to come before the high school eleven was fairly organized and "on its toes" before an opponent.

CHAPTER V.

MORE TROUBLE, BUT NONE BORROWED

"You needn't show up for football practice again, Rel," said Jack Lorimer, quietly.

The time was the morning after Webb had refused the use of his lot, and Mr. Lanard had come to the rescue. The scene was the school-yard. No one was near, for Jack did not wish to humiliate his enemy publicly and had waited to catch him alone. But Rel had not "heard the latest," and so when Jack spoke he only shoved his hands deep in his pockets and grinned.

"Where do you expect to practice? In the middle of the street?" he asked.

"Oh, no. Mr. Lanard has offered us the use of his field and given us five hundred dollars to make improvements. We shall have the finest gridiron this side of Boston."

Rel's grin froze instantly.

"So — so I'm off the eleven, eh?" he said.

"You are. We consider that you turned yourself out. The 'rule or ruin' spirit never makes a successful team. You started out on that line before you'd been with us twenty-four hours. I refused to take sides, but the team and the substitute

eleven voted against you unanimously, yesterday afternoon."

"I'll appeal to the school athletic association," blustered Rel.

"The executive committee met last night and voted unanimously to approve the team's action," Jack added, calmly.

"It's you that I have to thank for this, Jack Lorimer! I'll do you yet, see if I don't!" Rel hissed.

Jack smiled. "You talk like a fool, Rel," he said. "Nobody can do a fellow as long's he's going straight — and straight's my principle."

Leaving Rel to sulk by himself, Captain Jack hunted up his players. There was one danger now, and only one that he could see, and he was bound to guard against it.

"Remember," he told everybody, "we've got to keep up our rank — improve it if we can — and not give the principal or the school committee any excuse to shut down on the game. From nine o'clock till two forget football and plug as you never plugged before!" And every fellow promised.

Jack meant to be on the safe side in case Rel stirred up his father to make trouble in the school committee. But he thought it likely that after blustering for awhile Rel would come to his senses and keep still, and then the elder Webb would forget all about it.

Meantime things were lively. Jack had never studied harder than he studied now; and out of school hours there was the eleven to lick into shape, while at the same time the carpenters were busy under his direction in Lanard's field.

"Just because we've found a good friend that's no reason why we should rob him," said Jack to the other fellows; and the bills for the completed work amounted to only a trifle over three hundred dollars instead of five hundred dollars, when Jack called Mr. Lanard to see what had been done.

"There's the gridiron levelled and marked off, a covered grandstand with a players' room underneath, and a generous provision of bleachers," Jack told the old man; "and thanks to you, Mr. Lanard, we feel like kings."

"Didn't ye want the field fenced in?"

"No, sir, we've voted not to charge admission, and so we won't need to spend your money that way. A fence might look pretty, but it isn't necessary."

"Huh! When you grow older you'll learn to take all ye can git," said the old man; but he was pleased, nevertheless, and he smiled all over his face when Jack handed him two numbered pasteboards, saying:

"Those will admit to the two best seats in the grandstand at any match game — and we hope you'll come to every game we play."

"No tellin'! No tellin'!" the old man chuckled. "I may git so carried away with it that I'll want to jine your club. And don't ye forget," he added, "if you git in any kind of a hole, you come and see me. Old Seth Lanard's a powerful puller when he gits a-goin'!"

Jack thanked him heartily and took him across the field. The fellows were tackling the dummy, and the old man fairly roared as he stood and watched them.

Then the line men began to practise "breaking through," while the backs and ends, moving over near the opposite goal, got busy catching and returning punts. Mr. Lanard seemed greatly impressed.

"This ain't no lazy man's game, by gum!" he said.

"Football generally is pretty fierce, while it lasts," Jack agreed.

"Well, good luck to ye, and don't break your neck!" was the old man's parting word.

He might have thought there was danger if he had dropped around a half-hour later. For Jack had his practice to make up, and having now recovered from his shoulder-sprain, he was able to cut out a pretty hot pace for the eleven.

"By gum, as our old friend says, it's six o'clock!" he cried at last, as he happened to glance at his watch. "We'll call it a day's work, boys, and get under the shower-baths." And off they

scampered to the new dressing-room under the grandstand, the pride of every fellow's heart.

This was the real play-time of the day. Practice was work. But when, after half an hour of splashing and skylarking, they came out and started gaily for home, Jack was suddenly reminded that all the world was not friendly.

"Mr. Lorimer!" somebody called. A young man approached. "You remember me — Hawkins?"

"Oh, sure," Jack said. "You were in that little muss with Rel Webb and Lem Saunders. Glad to see you again. Anything new?"

Hawkins drew him one side.

"I thought you might like to know that that feller Webb is gettin' up a football team round town — mostly from our blacksmith shop at the Mills. They're big, husky fellers, sluggers, bigger'n your men, and the scheme is to challenge your eleven and slug — do you up."

Jack smiled. "Much obliged for the tip, Mr. Hawkins," he said. "We'll be ready for 'em."

"You won't try to play 'em, will you?" Hawkins asked, anxiously.

"Of course we'll play 'em. That's what we're here for."

"Well, wish you luck," Hawkins said, as he turned away. But he looked very doubtful about it.

Nor did Jack feel as confident as he acted. He knew that to tackle the gang Rel would collect

would be a big contract. But he would not borrow trouble about it now, and the very next morning it was driven out of his mind by more pressing matters.

Promptly came the challenge from the Outlaws, as Rel fitly named his eleven. As promptly Jack accepted it, and the game was fixed for the following Saturday.

And half an hour after this was settled, he was notified that Tom Bell, right end, and one of Millvale High's best men, had come down with the measles — a "disease of childhood" that is anything but a joke, when it strikes a fellow who is nearly nineteen.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW MAY ROXTON GAVE TIMELY WARNING

AGAIN, that evening, Jack had just settled down to study his home-lessons for next day, when a note from May Roxton was put into his hand.

"Dear Jack," May wrote, "Hetty, our coloured laundress, has caught a hint of a plot to damage or destroy the football team's grandstand and dressing-room, some time between this and Saturday.

"I can't imagine what anybody would expect to gain by such an act, but Rel Webb and Lem Saunders are capable of almost any sort of meanness, and if I were in your place I would keep my eyes open."

That was good advice. May never gave him any other kind. But Jack pocketed the note and bent his mind on French and algebra for a solid hour. Then he felt free to think of other matters in the few moments that remained before bedtime.

It was too late to call on May and get more information, but he wished he might see one of the

fellows — Terry McGrady, say — and talk over things. Why not run over to the house? But then, as if to answer his wish, Terry came in — scowling, at that, in a way that was not natural to his bright, good-natured face.

"Bad news to go to sleep on, Jack!" Terry cried. "You'll not thank me, maybe, that I didn't keep it till morning, but I had to get it off my stomach — Sewall Ford's out of Saturday's game!"

"So we've lost another, eh?" Jack said, calmly. Terry flung up his hands.

"Look at the lad, Mrs. Lorimer!" he wailed in comic disgust. "Sure, good men are scarce, we've raked the high school with comb and brush to find eleven, we've already sacrificed one to the measles, and with a big match coming and another man going, all he says is, 'Lost another, eh?' Cry, you iron hitching-post, or I'll smash a chair on you!"

Mrs. Lorimer smiled in company with her son. "It takes a good deal to upset Jack," she said, fondly and proudly.

Terry made a wry face. "So it doesn't me," he answered. "I had heart failure when Ford ran across our street, just now, and showed me a telegram calling him to Denver.

"To Denver!" Terry repeated. "For that is where Mr. Ford is now, and Mr. Ford must have his son with him right away. 'Tis a question of

property, I believe, mixed up somehow with Sewall's rich uncle — bad luck to him! For what's a million dollars, more or less, if you must miss a game of football!"

Jack laughed. "But see here, Terry," he added, soberly, "I wanted your opinion on a note May Roxton sent me to-night. I don't make a practice of showing personal letters, you know, but this is something that concerns all of us."

Terry read the note, more than once, shaking his head in perplexity.

"What for?" he asked. "What's the use?" Jack said nothing.

"They might injure our property out of what you might call sheer cussedness," Terry suggested, after awhile. "Then again, if our place was messed up, the Outlaws might pretend sympathy and invite us to play Saturday's game on their grounds — thinking it would be easier to collect a tough crowd to help do us up on their own premises. Eh? Is that it?"

"That's about the way I took it," Jack nodded.

"What are we going to do about it?"

"Keep our eyes open, as May says. Set a watch at night, for one thing."

"What'll we give 'em if they come around? Bird-shot?"

"No," Jack answered. "Something that'll hurt 'em worse — and do 'em a heap of good. I'll talk to you about that later. Question is now, which

of the subs can we play in Sewall Ford's position?"

A fellow named Will Chapin was soon settled upon. There was not much choice. Fellows had been slow about offering for half-backs because Jack Lorimer himself played right half and they did not want to put their work in comparison with his.

"Chapin's not quite so heavy as Ford and me," Captain Jack said. "But he's got good legs, and I think he'll be quick to catch on. That reminds me, Terry, it'll have to be signal-practice for ours, up to the minute of the game, and if we get any more setbacks — if we had to put on another sub, say — we'd be mighty liable to flummux on our best plays."

The field captain wrinkled his nose in his habitual, comical fashion.

"You'll want to kick me for saying it, Jack," he responded, "but I've got my eye on a rank greenhorn I'd like to use — a middler, at that!"

"Who's this?"

"Bussey, Jefferson Madison Bussey, by gosh!"

"Big fellow who has just blown in from the rural districts and entered the middle class?"

"That same. Ain't he a wonder? Get his arms and legs all going at once, the other team would imagine a cyclone had broken loose!"

Jack smiled at his friend's enthusiasm, but he thought a moment before he answered.

"If a man hasn't been trained in team play, you know, the more powerful he is the more damage he's liable to do his own side," he said. "Of course, it wouldn't matter that he's a middler. The athletic association agreed that any fellow, first year or middle, or junior or senior, could come out for any position, the idea being to line up the whole school back of the team — and I'm only a junior myself, a year behind most of you fellows. But a man that's new to the game — " He shook his head doubtfully.

"It's his size that catches me," Terry suggested.

"I know. What does your sister Nora say about Bussey?" Jack asked all at once. "She's in the same section, isn't she?"

Terry brightened up. "Yes; she says Bussey seems as green as grass, sometimes, but anybody who tries to take the lawn-mower to him gets moved over into the next lot in a hurry.

"His brogue of the back country is partly put on, maybe," Terry added, with a twinkle in his fun-loving eyes. "Sure, once in awhile I like to give me own tongue a rest from talkin' United States!"

Jack laughed. He knew it as a favourite trick of Terry to talk brogue to pretentious and conceited people, who, after they had patronized or "had fun with" the innocent, ignorant Irish lad, — as they took him to be, — were liable to experi-

ence the shock of finding out that he was the leader of his high school class.

"You're a deceitful rascal, Terry," Jack answered, "and you know I haven't any use for your opinion, anyhow, but I'd take Nora's say-so every time!" He gave his field captain a thump on the back that would have loosened the teeth of anybody but an athlete, and Terry returned just such another friendly punch. "All the same, if I were you, I'd just steer Bussey into the substitute eleven and let 'em try him out."

"Oh, sure, that's business. You keep an eye on him, that's all I ask. And now I'll run along home and give both of us a chance to get our beauty sleep."

Jack followed him to the door, and they stood a moment to enjoy the bracing October air. A boy was whistling his way along the street. He stopped as he recognized Jack and Terry by the light from the hall.

"Hello, fellows!" he called. "D'you know one of your football crowd's been getting crippled to-night? That's right! Sandy Carr, it was. Slipped on the cellar stairs, carrying up a hod of coal, and broke his wrist."

"Never rains but it pours, eh, Terry?" Jack muttered. But Terry said not a word. He only went over and banged his head against the side of the house.

"Oh, we'll straighten it all out somehow," Jack added, with more confidence than he felt.

"Got to take chances, you know, and make the best of things," he went on. "In fact, we're taking chances this minute on that dressing-room of ours — though I think the Outlaws, or their tools, would wait until nearer Saturday to do any dirty work. They'd calculate that anything happening only a night or two before the game would give us less chance to recover ourselves."

"S'pose they're going to burn our fixings?"

"Likely enough that's what they'll try to do."

"You said you had a plan?" Terry suggested.

Jack chuckled. "Yes," he said, significantly "Whether they use fire or not, we'll meet 'em with water!"

CHAPTER VII.

MR. LANARD SETS OUT TO FIX THINGS

TUESDAY was a busy day. But before Captain Jack set out to brace his crippled team, even before he called to learn how Tom Bell was "making out" with the measles and ask about Sandy Carr's broken wrist, he hunted up the eleven's faithful friend, Seth Lanard.

"So the hoodlums air goin' to spile your buildin's and then do ye up afterwards, air they?" the old man said, with an ugly gleam in his deep-set gray eyes. "Well, I can't help ye none after ye get on the field and start playin' football; but I cal'late we can fix it so's if they come snoopin' around at night to do mischief we can make 'em terrible sick o' their bargain.

"Couldn't be a better way to do it than that you've been tellin' me about. Haw, haw, haw! Wish't we had a hydrant inside that dressin'-room, by gum! But I'm goin' right down to City Hall, to the water department, and I'll have somebody up, in a jiffy, to rig some kind of a stand-pipe. If there's any way to get extra pressure on, I'll see to that, too. They're kind o' friendly to me, down

't City Hall, and I cal'late we can have all the water that an inch and a half hose'll carry without bustin'.

"Cost? Git out, lad, I'm goin' to fix up this contraption, hose and all, for my own satisfaction! If 'twasn't for this pesky rheumatiz o' mine, I'd set up nights with ye, to have the fun o' seein' it work!

"You'll find things all ready for ye this evenin' —'nless somethin' breaks that ain't already cracked — and if you conclude that the water ain't goin' to be enough to do the business, I'll buy ye a dog and a shotgun, by gum!"

A friend like Mr. Lanard was worth having. Jack's courage rose so high after this little talk that everything "looked easy." He fairly romped through his lessons that morning, getting good marks in all. At intermission he went after Terry McCrady and gave him a hint of his plans, and Terry's delight made Jack feel better still.

"I'd like to start the thing myself," Jack added, "but I'm not quite up to condition, and if you and one of the other fellows will stand watch to-night, I'll go on guard to-morrow night."

"Sure," said Terry. "Any one of them would jump at the chance, but I'll take Phil Kavanagh. I've been wanting to get Phil off in a corner and write some signals on his brain in indelible ink. Somehow he always does the right thing, but it's more because he has a genius for the game than because he knows what I'm telling the fellows to do."

At that moment Rel Webb came around the corner of the building. His old-time crony, Lem Saunders, was once more with him, looking pale, and even thinner than usual, from his illness.

"Hello, Lem," Jack said. "Feeling fit again?"

"Oh, so-so," Lem answered, sourly. Rel only scowled as they walked past. Terry grinned as he glanced from them to Jack.

"Nothing doing," he said. "They don't want to play in your yard any more than they ever did. But that reminds me," he added, "Bussey has promised to come out this afternoon. 'Kind o' like to try this 'ere football game, ef ye won't be too rough,' Jefferson Madison says. Sounds backwoodsy, doesn't it? But, somehow, Jack, I can't help thinking that Bussey isn't as green as he looks!"

Jack smiled at the air of mystery with which Terry spoke.

"All right," he said. "Hope he turns out a star. We need a few. I don't see anybody — anybody — who can play Sandy Carr's game at left end. Do you?"

Terry shook his head mournfully. "All the subs are rotten," he answered. "Elverton, the one we had to draft, shows up bad enough, but the others are worse. Oh, we'll have to break Bussey in for the sake of his weight, you see if we don't!"

Yet at first glance, as he ambled on to the field that afternoon, wearing a broad, good-natured

grin, Bussey seemed a very discouraging proposition. He must have been five feet ten, and he might have weighed one hundred and fifty or more; but his stoop and his slouching gait took off the inches and the pounds, so that any one glancing at him casually would never have given him credit for his really fine physique.

His mouth ajar and his arms dangling awkwardly at his sides, Bussey stood and watched the practice — just at that moment a tackle and halfback crisscross. After a number of trials it went about right, and Captain Jack told the fellows to take a little breathing-spell. He walked up to Bussey.

"Like to take a kick at the ball?" Jack asked, pleasantly.

"Oh, I dunno. Ain't no brick or anything inside it, is they?" the countryman demanded, suspiciously.

"No, 'tisn't loaded." Jack punched it a few times and handed it over.

Bussey kicked. But he kicked low down on the toe, the surest way to waste force and spoil aim, and the ball wobbled a few feet and stopped as though disgusted. It flashed through Jack's mind that he could use Bussey as a "horrible example" — to show fellows how not to kick.

However, he said nothing, kept his face straight, and, picking up the ball, returned to where Bussey stood.

"Try a run and a tackle," Jack suggested. "Take a little sprint as far as that goal, just to limber up, and then come back and take hold of me as you've seen the rest of us do."

Bussey shook his head dubiously. "I might hurt ye if I bump into ye," he said. "I'm heavier'n you be."

"I'll take the risk. Go on."

By this time the fellows had found out that something interesting was under way, and that they couldn't afford to be left out. One by one they gathered around, destined to witness as laughable a scene as ever took place on a football field.

"Well," said Bussey, "I'm a-startin'!"

He seemed to collect himself for a great effort, and broke into a run. Such running! Down on the farm a turkey must have been his model, for posture and gait were such as one never sees except in that most ungraceful fowl.

A smile, or a chuckle, or even a laugh, could not do justice to that run. The boys howled.

But the tackle was funnier still. Jack braced himself. The big countryman came back at his queer little pigeon-toed trot. He put out his arms. There was no change in his attitude, no stooping or plunging or even lowering his head. Simply he seized Jack high up around the waist, and hugged him hard, and grinned in his face.

Jack grinned, too. As for the other fellows, they rolled on the ground and roared.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN JEFF REALLY GOT INTO THE GAME

A MOMENT passed. Then Bussey spoke. "Dunno but I'd like to try that over ag'in," he said.

Somehow there was a new note in the drawling voice, and as Jack glanced at him quickly he thought he saw the flicker of a smile around the big mouth.

"Go ahead," said Jack. Bussey turned toward the goal.

Ah, that was something like running! "Turkey" Bussey could never be that fellow's nickname! There was grace and there was power in every movement, and the clean-limbed action told of endurance as well as speed. The fellows gaped at each other. They could not understand this transformation.

Now Bussey was coming back. Jack made ready. He had an idea that this tackle would be "different." So it was, and a beauty. Bussey gripped him low, coming in like a thunderbolt, and they rolled on the ground together.

"Bully!" Jack yelled, even as he went down. This was the kind of play he had been looking for!

"Dunno but I better try another kick, too," Bussey said, quietly, as they rose to their feet.

They were near the twenty-five-yard line. Bussey turned to Jack with a wink and a grin. "Drop-kick or place-kick or punt?" he said.

"Drop."

Bussey took the kick. The ball sailed over the cross-bar in as true a line as if it had been shot out of a gun. The countryman watched its course with a satisfied air, and turned to Jack again.

"Plenty more kicks where that one come from!" he said, with a dry chuckle.

"Bussey, you're a wonder!" Jack cried. "We've got to have you on the school team right away!" And all the other fellows said the same.

"I've a bone to pick with him, though!" Terry added. "What made you pretend you didn't know anything about the game, Bussey?"

"Well, you see, I haven't any business to be playing football." Bussey was speaking seriously now, and his "country" accent and manner had almost disappeared. "I'm kind o' thick-headed, have to study considerable before I can learn much of anything, and I made up my mind when I came here that it would be school for me and nothin' else.

"But t'other day, Saturday, I happened to drift around to another field where there was a gang of big fellers practisin'. They didn't know me from a hole in the ground, and they talked pretty free amongst themselves about what they'd do to the

high school crowd. Sort o' riled me, that did; and I thought I'd like to get my paws on a few of 'em and squat 'em up some.

"I'll be honest with ye, though; I wouldn't have mixed in jest for fun. If I'd found ye a slack-twisted crowd here, without any discipline, and actin' as though ye was afraid somethin' was goin' to happen to ye, I'd never have shown ye any different playin' than that I did a spell ago." He grinned, and everybody joined him.

"But you ain't that kind, and I tell ye you've got a chance to win. Them galoots — the Outlaws, are they? — haven't any notion of team play. Every single man's goin' it on his own hook. Before the first half's over, the eleven might be playin' in eleven different towns, or pretty near it. You can beat 'em, spite o' their size — and if I can help any, cap'n, I'm with ye!"

"Three cheers for Bussey, left end!" called Captain Jack; and they came with a will.

"Oh, shucks!" said Bussey — but he was pleased.

"Get right into the game," Captain Jack added. "You'll find some togs in the locker numbered 7, there in the dressing-room, that will do you for this afternoon, if you can get 'em on. We'll fit you out to-night, anyway."

There was no space to spare in Ford's football uniform, after Bussey had pushed his big frame into it, but he made the best of the straight-jacket

costume and promptly demonstrated that he had not much to learn.

Old Seth Lanard came around as practice was ending, and looked on for a few minutes.

"Sock it tew 'em!" he yelled, as he watched the work of the rush-line. "That's the way ye want to do it Saturday — only more so!

"Things suit ye, the way we've got 'em fixed in your dressin'-room there?" he said to Captain Jack.

"Couldn't be better, sir; thank you!"

"That air stream of water will lift a man right off'm his feet, if it hits him fair," the old man chuckled. "I druther have it than a cannon, by gum! All the same, I've put a gun in there," he added. "If the night-hawks air too many for ye, fire it off, and me and my hired men'll be down on 'em like a thousand o' brick!"

"I'll do it, sir, and tell the other fellows. McGrady and Kavanagh will be on guard to-night, and to-morrow night I and — and Bussey, perhaps. Oh, I forgot, you don't know him. Mr. Lanard, let me introduce Jeff Bussey, who takes Ford's place," Jack added, as the new man came along.

"You're a good, stocky lad, and I'm pleased to meet ye," Lanard said. "Cal'late if you and Lorimer here got stirred up you could handle three or four of 'em without any weapons but them ye carry at the ends of your arms!"

The big fellow looked puzzled. He did not understand what Lanard meant. In a few words Jack explained the possibility of a raid on their property, and invited Bussey to bear him company on night watch.

"You bet," Bussey answered. "We won't go home till mornin', nuther," he added, with a grin.

To come at once to the point, it may be recorded here that Terry and Phil Kavanagh didn't "go home till morning" on that first night. But, much to their disgust, nothing happened. There was no sight or sound of any intruder.

"But the gang'll show up if you're on hand," said Terry, Wednesday morning, when reporting their fruitless vigil to Jack. "Things are always happening, somehow, when you're around. Beats all! Say, why not put Bussey off, and let you and me stand watch to-night? I ought to have the first call when there's any fun a-going!"

"True enough, Terry; but I think we'd better not change the plan. I need to know the fellows pretty well, and this will give Bussey and me a fine chance to get acquainted."

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTAIN JACK DROWNS A CONSPIRACY

INDEED, it was easy to get "chummy" in that little dressing-room, under the grandstand planted in a bare field away off at the edge of town, for at night it was a lonesome place, and any two fellows would have felt like sitting close and using their tongues.

Dark and windy, the night seemed made for mischief. A plotter would take no pains to disguise his movements, since there was no light in the dressing-room, nothing to show that any one was on watch; while as for the fellows, Jack's bull terrier, Ben Butler, would give them warning before a stranger got very near. So there was no reason why they should not talk.

"I've been thinking," Bussey said, when they had "located" everything they would need to use, and arranged watches so that each could get some sleep, "I've been thinking I'd like to steer this Millvale High eleven up against the team I used to play with, the Four Corners Indians."

"Think we could scalp 'em?" Jack asked.

"Dunno. Dunno's you'd play with 'em. They're all farmers' sons and fellers that earn their own living more or less, and seeing how you feel about the Outlaws, because they're working men, ye might think the Indians were sort o' beneath ye."

Jack was silent a minute from sheer surprise. Then the words came fast enough.

"Oh, you're twisted, twisted the worst way!" he said. "All of us fellows will have to earn our living. Three of the boys work out of school hours, now, two of 'em carrying paper routes. Take my case: father's a machinist; never had any money to speak of until after he was forty; worked at the bench until his inventions panned out, and isn't ashamed of it, either. If I go to a technical school, as I expect to, I'll come pretty near putting myself through."

"I didn't s'pose that Webb feller would 'sociate with any but millionaires!" Bussey commented, with a dry chuckle. "Maybe that's partly what give me my mistake."

"Well, Rel's the only moneyed man we've had on the team — the only fellow with money enough to waste — and he's the fellow who organized the Outlaws and is at the bottom of all this fuss. It's him and his gang we mean, not the fellows who work at the Eagle Mills, when we talk about hoodlum Outlaws."

"Some of them big blacksmiths are liable to get

kind o' lively, jest the same!" Jeff answered, warningly.

"Oh, yes, there are some good straight fellows in the Outlaws who will play a rough game just because Rel has given 'em the fool idea lots of people have, that a game of football is a cross between a wrestling match and a prize-fight. They'll be all right when they learn better and —"

Ben Butler interrupted with a low growl.

"Quiet, Ben!" Jack ordered. The dog lay still, though with every muscle tense for action.

There was a moment when the boys, listening with all their ears, only thought they heard. A moment later, and they were sure of it. Footsteps sounded outside, and they caught low mutterings of voices.

Of course the marauders had looked over the ground by daylight and planned their attack. Now they were getting their bearings. Jack thought he knew where they would try to enter — at a half-window that was only breast high from the ground — and he was right.

A fumbling at the outside shutter, a wrench, and a click, and it swung open. Two forms were darkly outlined against the glass. Jack, standing invisible in the inner shadows, lifted and aimed a heavy hose-pipe. Himself unseen, he could follow almost the slightest movement of his uninvited visitors.

They were feeling for the window-catch; they had found it; it yielded. They were wedging some

tool between the window and the bottom casing. Just a moment, now —

As the window slowly began to rise Jack's toe tapped the floor softly. It was a signal. With one mighty heave, Bussey, at the new stand-pipe, turned on the water. Jack braced himself. As it throbbed through the pipe it nearly took him off his feet. But he held the hose steady, straight at his mark.

Then, all in an instant, rushing out with tremendous force, the water shot from the nozzle. Full in the face it took one scoundrel, and he dropped as though he had been shot. Jack turned the hose. The other fellow swallowed a curse and fell half-strangled.

"Open the door, Bussey! Hold 'em, Ben!" Jack called in one breath. He jumped to the window, dragging the hose with him.

One of the rascals was staggering to his feet. Jack aimed a stream that rolled him over, gasping and spluttering. Just then the other sat up. Jack took him in the breast with another stream and laid him flat again.

By that time Ben Butler was outside, ready for business.

"Hey, you scamps!" Jack yelled. "Climb that tree!" It was a big elm that overshadowed the end of the grandstand.

One of the fellows moved at the sound of the voice. Ben Butler growled warningly in his ear.

"For goodness' sake, boss!" the vagrant whined. "We can't do it nohow. We's froze!"

Jack sent the stream of water perilously near. "Up with you, both of you!" he commanded.

With many groans, and after more than one tumble, they managed to hoist each other as far as the first crotch of the elm, while Ben Butler looked after them and licked his chops regretfully.

"Hold 'em, Ben," Jack said. The dog lay down under the tree.

"All right, Bussey, we've got 'em," Jack said, exultantly. "Shut off the water, and we'll fasten up. The show is over for to-night, sure's you live!"

As they locked the door behind them there sounded from the tree a hollow voice:

"Say, boss, we's drowned and we's froze. How long you goin' to keep us up here?"

"Oh, till morning, I guess," Jack called back, cheerfully. "Watch 'em, Ben!"

And Ben Butler answered, dog fashion, that he would watch 'em hard.

CHAPTER X.

DETERMINATION AGAINST DIRT

MILLVALE HIGH		OUTLAWS
Bussey, l. e.	. . . . .	r. e., Webb
Kavanagh, l. t.	. . . . .	r. t., Greenwood
Bacon, l. g.	. . . . .	r. g., O'Brien
Janvrin, c.	. . . . .	c., York
White, r. g.	. . . . .	l. g., McSorley
Collins, r. t.	. . . . .	l. t., Wellington
Elverton, r. e.	. . . . .	l. e., Patch
McGrady, q. b.	. . . . .	q. b., Stacy
Chapin, l. h.-b.	. . . . .	r. h.-b., Flaherty
Lorimer, r. h.-b.	. . . . .	l. h.-b., Mack
Harriott, f. b.	. . . . .	f. b., Leeds

THAT was the line-up on Saturday afternoon. The names tell little or nothing. But what a difference the sight of the men revealed!

With the exception of Webb, Wellington, and McSorley, the Outlaws actually were men — big, husky fellows, against whom the players of Millvale High looked small and feeble. And yet in the few minutes of preliminary practice a keen observer might have noted another difference, one more favourable to Captain Jack's eleven.

The Outlaws were stiff and "logy." They passed awkwardly, were slow in recovering a fumble, and ran as though their size was a handicap. Lorimer's men, on the contrary, moved with snap and precision, knowing exactly what they wanted to do, and doing it always "on the jump."

Rel Webb couldn't see it.

"Bell is out, and so's Ford, and so's Carr," he said to his left guard, McSorley; "it's only a scrub team they've got!" But Webb was blinded by ill-feeling, and others were more clear-sighted.

The grandstand exhibited another curious contrast — a warning, it might have been taken, of the kind of game that some of the Outlaws meant to put up.

Captain Jack had sent his opponents a hundred tickets, covering nearly half the seats. But except for a few women and girls their end of the stand was empty. Their supporters, some of them pretty tough-looking citizens, were bunched along the sidelines in noisy, quarrelsome groups.

But the high school eleven were not likely to do anything they were ashamed to have seen by their mothers and sisters and sweethearts, and their section of the stand was packed.

May Roxton was there, with Rose Ahearn and Clare Bell and Nora McGrady and other enthusiasts, who would stick by the boys from start to finish, even though to-day they could do little more than display the school colours, red and white.

Principal Blaisdell was there, with Mr. Arkwright and Mr. Jenison of the school committee.

Mr. Lanard had come early, escorting the baby granddaughter whose life Jack had saved — a powerful mascot, one would think. And, of course, all the high school girls and boys were on hand with sisters and brothers and friends not a few, prepared to "root" for their favourites.

"Rel Webb's a lucky boy," said May Roxton, thoughtfully, as she looked down on the field. "Lucky that he isn't in jail instead of those two wretched negroes he bribed to destroy this place!"

"Have they confessed?" Rose Ahearn asked.

"No, not yet. They were bound over to the grand jury, and somebody got them out of jail. The boys haven't much doubt that when the trial comes off they'll learn the truth."

It may be said here that the trial did not come off, for the negroes "skipped their bail" — furnished by a pawnbroker who had a sort of backstairs connection with Rel's father — and were never more seen in Millvale. But their arrest had served its main purpose, to notify the enemies of the eleven that its property was under guard.

"Watch the field!" cried Clare Bell, suddenly.

Rel Webb, the captain of the Outlaws, had won the toss and taken the kick-off. Captain Lorimer chose the west goal. What wind there was was in his favour.

Stacy set things moving, and it was Lorimer

himself who got the ball. Greenwood and O'Brien had raced with it, but Kavanagh blocked Greenwood, and Captain Jack, dodging O'Brien, carried the ball nearly to the Outlaws' 50-yard line before he was downed.

It was a brilliant beginning. Lorimer's admirers yelled his name, and all the friends of the high school cheered lustily. With such luck following, the first scrimmage might plant the ball in the enemy's territory.

Janvrin snapped the ball to McGrady. McGrady passed it to Bussey. With Bacon and Chapin supporting him, the big fellow ripped through the opposing line as though it had been a sheet of paper. McSorley and Wellington were the weak spot, and he had worked them for a gain of more than five yards.

Millvale lost the ball on a fumble by Collins, but Wellington in his turn fumbled a pass from York, and when the living mass untangled, Harriott had the ball. But he rose from the ground with difficulty, blood streaming from his face.

Janvrin pointed at McSorley. "I saw that fellow deliberately kick our man in the head!" he cried, fiercely.

The umpire looked uncomfortable. "I didn't perceive it," he answered. "You know the penalty for unnecessary roughness, gentlemen — disqualification. I shall enforce it."

They had to let it go at that, for the referee, no

more than the umpire, had seen the sly assault. "I'm all right, fellows," Harriott said, but he wavered as he stood, and Bussey, who had struck up a great liking for him, shook his head and glared at Webb like an angry bull preparing to charge.

That gave Webb an idea. He thought he saw what the next play would be. Bussey was getting into action; he was the man to keep his eyes on. The Outlaws massed their players to patch the hole the big fellow had broken through before.

But the Millvale men fooled them. There was no sound of signals, but a false pass put the ball out of their sight for a moment. The next thing they knew Captain Jack had it and was tearing toward their goal.

White and Collins were interfering for him, and Elverton's long legs were fast putting him in a place where he, too, could be useful. Straight for Leeds and Mack the Millvale fellows steered.

The high school boys looked less than a mouthful for the big men in the Outlaws' backfield, and Leeds and Mack waited confidently, prepared to chew them up.

But the Outlaws were not lively enough to cover all the ground there was to guard. Just at the last moment, when all five men were almost at handgrips, it was White and Collins only who flung themselves upon their adversaries. Captain Jack had swerved and darted past like a flash of light-

ning. Unobstructed, he carried the ball across the line for a touch-down.

Bussey came forward and kicked the goal. Millvale had drawn first blood!

Thirty-minute halves had been agreed upon, and of the first there was still twelve minutes to play. "Time enough to make another six points!" yelled a high school rooter as the team changed goals.

On and off the gridiron, however, things were looking rather squally. The players Rel Webb had gathered from the Eagle Mills were not taking their setback very much to heart, but Rel and his particular cronies were furious, and showed it. Their feelings seemed to influence the hoodlum element among their supporters.

Oaths and foul words were hurled from the sidelines. The rowdies started a number of little fights, and kept the special officer busy. Old Seth Lanard wanted to go down and throw the rascals out, and May Roxton had all she could do to hold him.

"Jack and the other boys can take care of themselves," she argued. "Let those fellows hoot at us, if they want to — we don't mind what such creatures say."

The Outlaws chose that Millvale should take this kick-off. McGrady gave the oval a good lift, and Rel Webb heeled a fair catch.

That was not glory enough for Rel. He wanted to make the free kick himself. But in his spreading preparations he let the ball touch the ground,

and the Millvale rushers instantly charged for a gain of five yards on the line-up.

The kick, when he did make it, was a feeble affair. Kavanagh got the ball and carried it a few yards. In the next scrimmage White advanced it a little farther.

One thing was becoming clear, even to some of the spectators. Webb and two or three others were not so anxious to play good ball as they were to cripple their opponents. But, somehow, the officials never seemed to see the kicks and punches they gave on the sly.

In spite of such unsportsmanlike defence, Millvale slowly forced the ball ahead. Luck was not with the trick plays she tried, but small gains were made on rushes, and they counted up. If there had been just a little more time —!

As matters stood, it seemed wise at last to try for a goal from the field. Terry McGrady lifted the ball handsomely and sent it sailing over the cross-bar. Thirty seconds later, the whistle sounded.

CHAPTER XI.

REL WEBB HEARS SOMETHING DROP

"SEEMS kind o' doubtful, sometimes, whether we're playin' football or out skunk-huntin', but we ain't licked yet!" Bussey said, with one of his wide, slow grins.

"It is dirty football that Webb and some others are putting up, but we'll beat them, anyway!" Captain Jack answered. "How are you feeling, Ned?" he said to Harriott.

"Oh, I'll live long enough to meet McSorley off the field and punch his head!" the fullback answered. He laughed as he said it, but there was something in his eye that showed it was not altogether a joke.

At that moment Stacy, the Outlaws' quarterback, ran over from his side. Captain Jack had warmed to Stacy, "on the looks of him." He could not play football a little bit, but everything indicated that he was a fine, straight fellow.

"Like to have a word with you, Captain Lorimer," Stacy began. Jack walked forward. Stacy went to the point at once.

"Are you the fellow that pulled a little girl out

from under a trolley-car, on Shooter's Hill, a few mornings ago?" he asked.

"Why, what of it?"

"Well, a girl that was in the car, a girl I think a good deal of, she saw the whole business," Stacy explained. "She's up there in the stand. The minute she got a fair look at you, when you took off your head-harness, she said you were the feller. Say, Lorimer," Stacy added, earnestly, "you can have anything I've got!"

Captain Jack put out his hand. "That's all right, old man," he said. "We'll call it square if you'll make this a football game instead of a slugging match. Another thing, if you're responsible for 'em, call off your hoodlums on the sidelines. There are ladies in hearing, you know."

"Everything goes but gouging, in football, doesn't it?" Stacy replied, good-naturedly. "That's about what Captain Webb's been telling us."

"Not much! Webb and McSorley and Wellington have done a dozen things that the umpire, if he'd had his eyes open, would have penalized or disqualified them for."

"Oh, the umpire, Webb owns him! But tell us about it," Stacy said.

Hastily but clearly Jack told him what the rules did and did not allow. Stacy looked grim.

"Seems as though we've been played for suckers," he commented. "But I'll fix that. As

for them things over there, I wasn't the one that let 'em out of their cage, and I was plannin' to call 'em down, anyhow."

With that he walked over to the sideline and paused in front of the most obnoxious group.

"Say, Patsy," he told the rat-faced fellow who seemed to be the leader, "I'm passin' the word around that if there's any more foul talk or monkey tricks in this neighbourhood, us fellers from the Mills will settle for 'em after the game's over. And that means you, see?"

"Aw, close up!" was the impudent reply.

Without another word Stacy drew back his arm and gave the hoodlum an open-hand slap in the side of the head that sent him reeling half a dozen feet.

Rel Webb rushed forward. "Here you, Stacy, that's a friend of mine!" he called, angrily.

Stacy spat on the ground.

"You keep darned poor company, then," he answered. "But here, I got somethin' to say to you." He took Rel by the arm and walked him forward into a group of his own men. "You've been tellin' us that football was played thus — and — so —"

In very pointed terms Stacy compared the instructions Rel had given them with what the rules of the game allowed.

Rel tried to answer coolly. "Considering that I've paid all expenses, and spent a lot of money on

this team, it seems to me I ought to have things my way," he said.

"You hound!" Stacy blazed out. "You think you can hire us to work out your grudges against fellers you're afraid to meet man-fashion? If I see any sign, this half, that you and your two pups ain't playin' a square game, I'll bury you, head down, right then and there!" And his husky comrades from the Eagle Mills nodded solemn agreement.

None too soon to suit Rel, the whistle blew.

"Keep hitting her up, boys!" Captain Jack charged his players. "We want all the team playing all the time!"

That second half was clean football, and, considering that one team was inexperienced and the other was handicapped by substitutes, it was good fast work.

Chapin contributed the first exciting incident by going through that fatal hole between Wellington and McSorley. Janvrin blocked Mack, and Collins and White put Flaherty out of business. Leeds charged on Chapin, but Captain Jack got on the spot just in time to nail the Outlaws' fullback. Chapin escaped, sped on, and made the touch-down.

Then Bussey came out to kick the goal — and failed!

"I cal'late that little wind-flaw threw the ball off," the big fellow muttered, mournfully. "I hate to lose that point, just the same!"

"Accidents will happen, Jeff," was Captain Jack's cheery answer. "All any of us can do is to do the best we can — and keep hammering!" That was Captain Jack's way, the way that kept the fellows loyal.

Misfortunes seldom come singly, and there was a little while, after the next kick-off, when it looked as though the Outlaws were going to score.

One of the substitutes misunderstood a signal and made an opening, of which O'Brien took advantage. A second misplay helped him along, and his companions pushed him forward bravely. But at their 15-yard line the Millvale men made a desperate rally.

Finally the Outlaws lost the ball on downs. But the half was so nearly over that there seemed no chance of Millvale's increasing her tally.

"We've skunked 'em, anyhow!" said old man Lanard, looking down from the stand in supreme satisfaction.

But ten seconds later something happened that brought the old man to his feet yelling like mad. A mass play had torn a hole through the Outlaws' left wing, and Jack Lorimer was through it and away!

Mack sprang for him, and to the amazed spectators it seemed that Lorimer fairly leaped over his head. Leeds rushed to tackle him, but two marvellous dodges left Lorimer still free.

With half the Outlaws pounding at his heels,

Captain Jack ran on. One last desperate effort, nerved by hate, was that of Rel Webb, when he flung himself far forward and clutched at the runner's legs. But Rel's own men tripped over him, and, to the accompaniment of a storm of cheers, Jack carried the ball across the line.

"Kick the goal, Jeff," he said to Bussey.

The big fellow glanced at him gratefully. "I'll do it this time, or die a-tryin'!" he said. He did it, too — just as the whistle blew.

Score, 21 to 0 in favour of Millvale High.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared old man Lanard, fairly dancing up and down. "It couldn't 'a' come out better if it had been a story in a book, by gum! There's that feller Webb sneakin' off out o' sight, and here's Cap'n Jack landin' on top! Haw, haw, haw!"

Meanwhile, down on the field, Stacy lined up his own comrades, the husky fellows from the Eagle Mills.

"Three cheers for Captain Jack Lorimer and his bunch!" Stacy cried. "They're all right!" And the cheers came in such a mighty, overpowering roar that even the fellows on the sidelines had to join in.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT SETH LANARD HEARD AND THOUGHT

THUS a contest that had promised trouble, if not disaster, ended pleasantly, and seemed to have added to Lorimer's list of friends. But to sum up the consequences of a game played later on by Millvale High was, at first, less easy.

Mainly to please Jeff Bussey, the eleven visited "Four Corners, 'way off in the country, six miles from a railroad, the place I come from," — as Jeff described it, — and engaged his old team, the Indians, defeating it by a score of 12 to 11. Captain Jack struck up a warm friendship with Harry Lee, the captain of the Indians, and the boys were royally entertained. But during the day and a half they were absent from Millvale, things happened.

It was Phil Kavanagh, who had been unable to accompany the team, who, meeting Captain Jack on his return, gave him the first hint of how matters stood.

"Looks as though one of our own crowd could do what Rel Webb failed at," Kavanagh said, trying to speak lightly. "We didn't lose our stand

and dressing-room last night, but we came blamed near it!"

"How's that, Phil?"

"Near as we can find out, Fitzpatrick, the new sub, had a gang in the room, smoking and carrying on, and somebody must have dropped a match or the stump of a cigar. One of Mr. Lanard's hired men happened along before the fire got much headway, but the place looks pretty ragged."

"Fitzpatrick was smoking, eh?"

"So we hear. Old man Lanard seems to blame you for the business," Kavanagh added. "Somebody must have got at him and filled him up. When I got around last night, after the fire was out, he was stamping round there swearing he was 'darned near ready to set down on Lorimer and that whole hoorah's nest!'"

Then Captain Jack headed straight for Lanard's — and encountered, almost at the first moment, a charge that was new in his experience, and one he had never expected to meet.

"They tell me there's gamblin' on your games, Lorimer!" the old man growled.

"Oh, I wouldn't bring that up, Uncle Seth," his nephew, Ben Cashman, said, promptly and smoothly. "I don't believe Jack Lorimer has any part in that business, even if they do say so!"

From sheer surprise, Captain Jack was silent a moment. He looked at the boy instead of the man.

Ben Cashman had "been around," which meant

that his father and mother were rich and restless people, who were about as much at home in Honolulu as anywhere. For most of his life Ben had travelled with them.

He had stayed with his Uncle Seth long enough to go through the junior year in Millvale High. Then he and his father and mother rushed off to some other corner of the earth. Only the week previous had he reappeared in Millvale, proposing to take the senior year and graduate.

Though the term had been going on six weeks, there was no reason why he should not do this, since he had kept up with his class. Ben was smart enough, in school and out. The thing the fellows complained of was that he was too smart, sometimes — a good deal of a schemer, and inclined to be tricky.

Probably Ben was the one who had turned Seth Lanard against the football team. But to suspect this was one thing, and to prove it was another. Even while he was waiting for a chance to stab Jack Lorimer in the back, he would be perfectly friendly to his face. Here he was, now, standing up for Jack! But Jack was not so simple as to let a slander be covered up by a smooth speech — until he was out of hearing and unable to defend himself. He dragged it out at once.

" Please tell me exactly what you mean when you speak of gambling on the games, Mr. Lanard,"

Lorimer said. "I think as captain of the team I have a right to know."

"Certain, certain," the old man answered. "Well, as the story goes, there's bets made at Orne's pool-room on every game you fellers play — and Orne, the meanest, lowest-down skunk in town, has seemed to know, every time, how the game was comin' out."

The thing was so ridiculous that Captain Jack could not get angry — and yet it was too serious for laughter.

"You think we know which team is going to win, and somebody in our eleven tells Orne how to bet?" he asked.

"Looks like it."

"Why, it's impossible — absurd!" Jack cried. "A football match between two good teams is anybody's game until it's over, as Ben here could tell you. Our game with Doverdale High, last week, I fully expected to win — and we would have tied the score, you remember, if I hadn't lost a point by failing to kick a goal. Now, how —"

Ben interrupted. "Of course, I understand that was a fluke, an accident," he said, in a sympathetic voice. "And yet, to be frank with you, my dear fellow, the way Orne talked about that very game strengthened these unfortunate suspicions.

"Orne bet that Doverdale would win. It might be only by a point, he said, but Doverdale would get

the game. And when you, as you say, slipped up in kicking that goal — " Ben sighed and shook his head, as though he felt very bad about it. " It's little things like that," he added, " that —

" That stick in my crop! " put in old Lanard.

" You think I threw the game? " Jack asked. He spoke quietly, but there was a dangerous gleam in his eye.

" Certainly not! " Ben answered.

" No, I don't," Mr. Lanard said with equal promptness. " And yet, if these pesky yarns get started and circulated round, it means that your team's out o' kilter somehow, and you've got to put it in such shape that yarns won't have a chance to start. There must be information a-leakin' out to that skunk Orne, or he wouldn't be able to tell how every game is comin' out! "

It seemed rather useless to argue with a man who held him responsible because a cheap gambler happened to have luck. But there was one thing Jack wanted to know.

" How is Orne betting on that return game we play with Doverdale High next Saturday? " he asked.

" He's betting you'll lose again. Funny thing, ain't it, that he's so sure of it that he makes bets a week ahead? "

" Well, the game hasn't been lost by us yet." Jack let it go at that. The less he talked, until he

knew how the land lay, the safer he would be. But he had expected Mr. Lanard to bring up the fire, and it proved that this was the next thing to come.

"I'm disappointed in ye, in the discipline ye keep!" the old man growled. "I guess there ain't any doubt 'twas cigars or cigarettes set that fire last night."

"I haven't had a chance to look into that," Jack answered. "I'll say right now, though, that I don't hold myself to blame if a sub was smoking. In the interest of the team, we have to give a show to any fellow who can play football. If he breaks training, we can throw him out. But we've got to start by assuming he means to be square. Isn't that right, Ben?"

"That's right!" Lanard's nephew answered, with a great show of heartiness. "I told you, uncle, that, even if everything was as it had been reported, you couldn't blame Lorimer for anything worse than bad judgment."

This was the kind of "defence" that hurt more than it helped, and Captain Jack didn't want to listen to any more of it. He rose.

"You've been our best friend, Mr. Lanard, and I'm sorry you have doubts of me or of the team," Jack said. "I think if you'll give us a few days to straighten things out, and if you'll keep your mind open until you've heard our side of any story, you'll soon be with us again. I hope so, anyway,

for we want you to take an interest in the plans we're making for this winter."

"Oh, I haven't gone back on ye," the old man answered. "I ain't forgot what you did for my little Polly!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW BOY GOES TO A PRIVATE PARTY

YET Captain Jack came away feeling that the call had not accomplished much. Nor did he get much satisfaction from his talk with Fitzpatrick, the sub who was blamed for the fire — though Fitzpatrick seemed honest enough about it.

"Fact is," Fitzpatrick said, "I had a couple of fellows from out of town with me Friday evening. We strolled over to the field. I tried the dressing-room door and found it unlocked. I took 'em in to show 'em around, and we stayed perhaps half an hour."

"They were smoking?"

"Yes, part of the time."

"Were you?"

"No."

"You broke two rules, Fitzpatrick," Captain Jack said. "You, as a sub, had no business in the room outside of training hours, and nobody has a right to admit an outsider without my or the field-captain's permission. However, we'll consider your case."

"Hope you'll give me another chance, captain,"

the young fellow said, anxiously. "I've been looking forward to making the team, you know, — I'd give my ears to play against Doverdale High next Saturday, — and I'll do anything you say to make up for last night and the damage that came from it."

He seemed so repentant that Captain Jack did not talk to him very severely — a step that Field-Captain Terry McGrady heartily approved.

"Sure a fellow's no good till he makes one big break," Terry said, emphatically. "'Tis then ye want to catch him on the bounce and treat him right. And does he make the break twice? Not on your life! But he pitches in and works like a — like a pup, to even up things!"

"How would that apply to Rel Webb's case?"

"'Tis Rel Webb is the exception that proves the rule — he havin' been a pup at the start!"

"I'm afraid Ben Cashman's another one that good treatment will be thrown away on," said Jack, rather gloomily. "Ben's only been here a week, you know, but he's got his uncle soured on us already. What provocation did we ever give him?"

Terry glanced at his chum in a comical way, and whistled a bar or two of "Ben Bolt." "Except that her name is not by way of being Alice," Terry suggested. But Jack waved the hint aside. He was too much in earnest.

"Cashman was a member of the school athletic association last year," Jack went on. "All he has

to do is to pay his dollar for this year's dues, and then he'll be fixed to work against us from the inside."

Somehow Terry did not seem so very much disturbed. "Ben plays football," he said, thoughtfully.

"Good game, too," Captain Jack admitted.

"We'll be safer with him inside, where we can watch him," Terry added. "Take him clear in. Get him into the substitute eleven — sure, their backs are as weak as though they'd been born with rheumatism! Put Ben on at right half — your understudy. 'Tis often I've wondered what we'd do for a sub if you missed a game or got knocked out — and Ben's the lad! The harder he hates you, the straighter he'll keep, the while he looks forward to playing your position one fine day!"

"There's something in that, Terry," Captain Jack agreed.

He did not raise the point that at once occurred to him, that Ben was capable of scheming to keep him out of the game in order that he, Ben, might play himself. To speak of that would look as though he was jealous or afraid. Besides, he knew that Terry and most of the fellows were intensely loyal, and so, on the whole —

"Use your own judgment about it, Terry," he said at length. "The substitute eleven does need backs, and if the idea looks all right to you over

Sunday, — why, ring in Cashman the first thing Monday morning."

And that settled it. Cashman was "rung in," when Monday morning came, and he acted as if he was pleased to be called upon.

But, admitting this to be a gain for the game in general, it could not make up for a loss the eleven was to suffer on the same day. Kavanagh, left tackle, came to Captain Jack at intermission, wearing a melancholy face.

"I'm out of it, Jack," he said. "My room teacher's been at the principal about my home lessons, and Blaisdell says I've got to drop football or the paper route now, right off. That means football, for I have to have the money the route pays me. The folks need it."

"Sorry, Phil," Captain Jack answered. "No need to tell you that, though. You know we'll all miss you. Wonder if we can't engineer some pull on the principal to keep you till after Saturday's game."

Kavanagh shook his head.

"No go," he said. "Blaisdell won't let up. Fact is, he gave me warning quite awhile ago. I didn't speak of it, because I was kind of ashamed of falling behind that way, and then again I thought I could put on more steam and carry the whole business along. I've failed, though, it seems, and this is the end of it." And Phil walked away, too unhappy to talk.

There was one good thing, just one, about a trouble of this kind, it could be shared with the field-captain. To Terry went Lorimer and told the bad news.

"Nothing to it but the incendiary, now," was Terry's comment. We'll have to put Fitzpatrick in Phil's place, and let him burn up Doverdale High."

"It's a poor swap!" Captain Jack replied. "Phil is a fellow you can lie right down on, on the field or off, but Fitzpatrick — well, I can't quite take to him, somehow."

Then he, too, walked away, "keeping his face straight," as a fellow who is in authority has to do, but probably feeling about as blue as Kavanagh himself. May Roxton saw through the mask. She smiled as she handed him a bit of paper.

"I see you need something to amuse you," she said. "Read this. I found it inside my desk this morning."

Jack took the scrap and read the few words written on it in a hand that was evidently disguised.

"Ask Jack Lorimer about Josie Lee, his new friend at Four Corners," the message ran.

"All right," Jack chuckled. "Ask me!"

"It wouldn't be any fun, considering you told me about her yesterday," May replied. "I'm angry," she added, with mock severity, "because you didn't give me a chance to ask you! I think I'll shut you out of our Hallowe'en party and invite Ben Cashman in your place!"

"Well, Ben's in line all right. He's richer than I am and almost as handsome. Seriously, May," Jack added, "this is a spiteful little trick. Any idea where that note came from?"

"Not the slightest. But somebody who went to Four Corners with the eleven must have given the information."

"Oh, well, that's nothing. Anybody, Terry himself, might have said by way of a joke that I stopped at Lee's and seemed struck with Harry's sister. But none of that crowd would try to make trouble between us in any such cowardly way as this!"

It was such a mean and malicious attempt to hurt May's feelings that it annoyed him more than a straight-out attack on himself, and he wasted considerable time studying the note and trying to think of a way to detect the writer. But when he went to the Hallowe'en party on Wednesday evening he had to own to May that he was still as much in the dark as he had been at first.

"I see you did invite Ben Cashman, as you threatened you would," Jack remarked, as he glanced around the Roxton parlours.

"Indeed I did not!" May retorted.

"But he's here," Jack argued. "Busy, as usual, telling people about other interesting places where he's been."

"Well, you know, six of us girls are concerned in this affair. Blame one of the others. Which

one? I'm sure I can't tell. Each girl had the right to give four invitations, and we know each other and each other's friends so well that we never should bother to compare lists. For instance," May added, roguishly, "I knew I ought to invite you, because if I didn't nobody else would!"

Jack laughed. "It's a crazy way to do things," he said. "Almost as muddle-headed an arrangement as calling this a Hallowe'en party, when to-day's the 9th of November!"

"Be careful, sir! You might not be invited to the other five parties! Be a good boy, now! See how nicely Mr. Cashman behaves!"

Indeed, there was never any question about Cashman's behaviour under such circumstances. Some of the other fellows found their limbs in the way sometimes, but Ben never did. He was entirely at home and completely at his ease, and Jeff Bussey, for one, watched him with admiration and envy.

"Wish't I could float around and gab the way that feller does!" Jeff confided to Lorimer. "I keep fallin' over my own feet, and I sha'n't think of anything to say to these girls till after I get home."

"You're all right, Jeff. They like you, and they'll take the will for the deed. As for Ben, they wouldn't believe what he told 'em if he swore it on a stack of Bibles a mile high!"

Jack spoke with more bitterness than was natural to him. The reason may have been that just at that moment Ben was addressing himself to May Roxton, and she seemed to find him very entertaining.

Yet May had a purpose in view. Prompted by Jack's chance remark, she was doing detective work. Some of her clues came from the unconscious Ben himself. Others were gained from Rose Ahearn and Clare Bell and the rest of the hostesses. When the case was complete she soon found opportunity to speak to Lorimer.

"Jack," she said, "I've discovered who invited Ben Cashman."

"Yes?" said Jack, indifferently. "Who was it?"

"Himself!"

And, strange as it seemed, that was the truth of it. Knowing of the happy-go-lucky way in which these parties were "put together," and trusting that the six girls would not compare notes, and that each would assume that one of the others had invited him, Ben Cashman had simply come in and made himself at home.

Jack Lorimer roared when he first heard of it. "What a magnificent nerve!" he chuckled. "When Ben gets ready to be President, all he'll do will be to go up to the White House and walk right in!"

But in another aspect the matter was no joke, and it did not take Jack many seconds to see it.

"Of course, it's an insult to you girls," he said. "Want me to turn him out — quietly, or otherwise?"

"No, you mustn't interfere at all, or let on that you know," said May, firmly. "This is our affair. We girls will punish him. Not here and now, perhaps, but he'll be sorry before we're through!"

Knowing how ingenious girls are at getting even, Jack did not doubt that for a minute. He felt rather sorry for Ben!

"Well," he answered, as he glanced at his watch, "it's half-past nine, and my evening's over, anyway. Ben's a sub, so I can leave him here for you to amuse yourselves with, but we who are playing on the eleven will have to get home to bed."

May pouted. "There are times when I hate football!" she exclaimed.

"Same here! Me, too!" laughed Jack. "Only three weeks more of it, though, and then we'll be getting ready to go skating!"

Quietly as he could, he rounded up his fellows, and promptly, even if unwillingly, they left the pleasant house. "Bed at ten" was one of the laws of the team. Yet it was fated that to-night the captain himself should be detained a little.

As Jack and Terry, who lived near each other, lingered at the foot of the steps to say good night to fellows who were going in other directions, two

young men came forward into the light of the street-lamp. Jack recognized them as employés of the Eagle Mills.

"How are you, Mr. Hawkins?" he said. "Glad to see you, too, Mr. Stacy." He turned to Terry. "You remember Stacy, the quarterback of the Outlaws?" he asked.

"Remember him?" Terry repeated, as he put out his hand. "Sure, I have four ribs that ache yet from the hug of him! And how do the Outlaws flourish these days, Mr. Stacy?"

Stacy smiled. "Pretty fair, I guess, since we dumped Webb," he answered. "Did you hear about that? Yes, we fired him out."

"Fired Rel out of the eleven he started himself!" Terry slapped Jack on the shoulder and laughed with pure delight. "Hurray, hurrah, and hurroo for the Outlaws!" he cried. "Here's my hand on it again!"

Stacy laughed in his turn. "Well, it's a kind of a comic layout all around," he said. "He's got a field without any players, and we've got the players without any field. Most any old dump has to do us to practise on, and if you'd see some of the gridirons where we've played match games, 'twould break your heart!

"But that wasn't what we wanted to say, Captain Lorimer," Stacy went on. "Hawkins and I've been to your house, and your mother said you were here, but you'd be comin' away by 9.30, so

we waited. Fact is, we think you fellers are all right, and you'd ought to know that a cheap skate called Orne, Orne that keeps the pool-room just off the Square, is workin' his mouth about you scand'lous!"

"Pretends we keep him posted about our prospects, how we think matches are coming out, and things like that?"

"That's part of it. Of course we know it's poppycock. Your friends would laugh at it and let it slide. But some enemy of yours might catch it up and use it against you.

"That's what I'm thinkin' of!" Stacy added, earnestly. "If it was only a question of a loafer lyin' to a gang of measly runts that think they're thoroughbred sports because they suck cigarettes and hang over a pool-table and bet a dollar sometimes, — why, 'twouldn't be worth noticin'. Trouble is, you never know where a dirty little yarn like that is goin' to fetch up!"

"I'm afraid some of the fellows have been talking to Orne, stuffing him, just for a joke," Jack said, thoughtfully.

"He says you talk to him yourself."

"What!"

"That's right!" Stacy affirmed. "That's what we think you'd ought to stop."

"You bet I'll stop it!" Captain Jack exclaimed. He turned on his heel in the direction of the pool-room, the others following.

They were almost at the door of the place before Lorimer broke his angry silence.

"Of course, it's possible this fellow has been deceived," he said. "If he doesn't recognize me, that'll be a point in his favour. Then you get him started about the game, and I'll come in at the right time."

"Sure!" answered Stacy and Hawkins, almost in a breath. "Count on us. We'll back you, any old way!"

Thus it was the young men from the Mills, who, first of the quartet, entered the pool-room, exchanging familiar nods with the fat, flashily dressed proprietor. Only two couples were playing, and there were few loafers on hand, and when Stacy and Hawkins led their party toward a rear table Orne bustled after them.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SMART YOUNG MAN IN DIFFICULTIES

"FINE night, gents," Orne said to the new arrivals. "Four-handed game?"

"That's what it looks like," Hawkins answered. "How's football?" he asked, as he picked out a cue.

"Nothin' to it but Doverdale, by what I hear."

"They tell me you hear about all that's goin', too," suggested Stacy.

Orne chuckled. "Well, so the boys seem to think," he replied. "Funny it happens so," he went on. "I never saw a game, never was on the field in my life. But there's a fine young feller, customer of mine — known him quite awhile, but never knew his name till a month ago — that seems to like to talk about his team, and he's got me pretty well posted."

"His team? There's only one that cuts any ice in this town. Jack Lorimer you're speakin' of?" asked Hawkins, indifferently, as he fished for a bit of chalk.

Orne lowered his voice to a confidential under-

tone and glanced around to see if others were listening.

"Well, the less said the better, sometimes, but between ourselves, that's it," he answered.

"That's a lie!"

If the pool-table had risen up and attacked its owner, he could hardly have been more surprised than he was at hearing this from the lad who faced him. Captain Jack spoke quietly. But his black eyes were blazing, and Orne, big fellow that he was, did not seem to feel quite comfortable in front of him.

"Wh-what's that?" Orne stammered.

"My name is Jack Lorimer," the other went on. "I'm the captain of the Millvale High School eleven, as these men know. Have I ever talked to you about the team, or any game, or any other subject?"

"Never saw you in my life!" gasped the mystified man.

"Your gabble about Lorimer and what he's told you has been repeated in places where it did me harm," Captain Jack said in a voice as clear and cold as ice. "Since you admit that I am not the person you know as 'Lorimer,' I expect you to produce the fellow — otherwise I shall hold you responsible."

A foolish smile broke over Orne's flabby face.

"Looks as though I'd been buncoed," he said. Then all at once his expression changed.

"Say, that bogus Lorimer got some money out of me!" he cried. "Yes, and by Jinks! he was coming in this very night for more! You wait! I'll show him to you — and then I'll help you strip the hide off him! Behind the screen, there — get behind the screen, for he's liable to be here any minute!"

Nor were they any too soon out of sight. Hardly had they placed themselves as they were directed when they heard the door open and Orne call out: "Hello, Captain Jack!

"Come over this way," he added, standing close to the screen. "It's nearer the stove, and I reckon I feel the cold more than you football fellers do.

"Got that other ten dollars for you, Lorimer," Orne went on. "You owe me twenty already. That right?"

"Sh-h-h! Yes." Jack and Terry recognized that cautious voice, and nudged each other. "Don't call my name so often, Orne," the voice continued. "I'm setting the team a bad example, being out so late at night, and it's just as well not to make it too public. Fact is, I wouldn't be sporting round this way if there was any chance for us to win against Doverdale, Saturday."

"You think there ain't any chance for Millvale to win?"

"Not a little bit! You can tell your friends on the quiet that Jack Lorimer says so."

Orne gave the screen a jerk to one side. "You can tell these yourself!" he said, grimly.

It was Lem Saunders, Rel Webb's crony, who stood before them, — Lem Saunders with a face that turned fairly ashen as he saw the fellow whose name he had stolen and misused.

An instant he stared as though petrified. Then he cast a wild and hunted glance around. Orne gripped him by the collar.

"You'll stay till we get through with you, if you stay in little pieces," he growled. "Told me your name was Jack Lorimer, didn't you?"

Lem nodded. He moistened his lips convulsively, but he seemed unable to speak. Orne turned to his visitors.

"Any questions?" he asked. Captain Jack thought a minute.

"I don't want to talk to the whelp," he said. "Just one thing, Saunders; you must meet me at my house to-morrow evening at seven o'clock, go with me to Mr. Lanard's and make a full confession of this. I say, must, remember!"

Orne tightened his grip on the wretched creature's collar.

"Rest o' you gentlemen got any remarks to make?" he inquired.

They shook their heads. "Take it away," said Terry.

"Well, then, this is my say-so," Orne bellowed. "You bring me the twenty dollars you owe me

before nine o'clock to-morrow morning, or I'll jail you for obtaining money under false pretences!"

Saunders was speechless still. The shock of fright had stunned him. But Orne did not wait long for an answer.

His hand on the rascal's neck, he marched him across to a side door. "Open it!" he roared, and Saunders so far got his wits together as to turn the knob. Then, stepping back a pace or two, Orne put all his rage and all his strength into one tremendous kick, that almost lifted Saunders into the air and sent him half-way across the alley.

Then Orne came back into his pool-room. He mopped his fat face nervously and turned to Captain Jack in a cringing fashion.

"You can see that I got took in," he said. "I'm mighty sorry for the talk I've laid to you, and I'll call it back as much as I can, but, by Judas! I reckon I stand to lose more by this business than anybody else does! S'pose you couldn't give me a pointer on that Doverdale game, could you, captain?" he asked, anxiously.

"You know as much about it as I do," Jack answered, crisply, as he buttoned his coat. "I'll just tell you, though, since it seems you've bet on the game —"

He stopped a second or two to pick his words, but Orne evidently thought he was going to get a valuable tip. He came forward a step.

"Yes, captain?" he said, eagerly.

"That I consider gambling the curse of sport, and when two men bet on a match I wish they might both lose!" Jack finished. Then, with the curtest of nods to the fellow, he led his friends out of the place.

"You want to look out for him, Lorimer," Stacy advised, as he and Hawkins said good night. "If he's got a lot of money up on that Saturday game, he'd spend a little more to make sure it came his way."

Jack laughed. "No fear of our boys selling out!" he said. "Guess his talk about bets is mostly talk, anyway. If he had much money on Doverdale, he wouldn't be so generous about giving information.

"All the same," Jack added, "I'm mighty grateful to you fellows for telling me of this. Bring your crowd around Saturday," — as he handed out a bunch of tickets, — "and we'll try to show you the real thing in football!"

"Good luck to you, Captain Jack!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE LITTLE NEPHEW BEGS PARDON

"But I don't deserve good luck, though, Terry," Lorimer muttered as they turned toward home. "I'm growing thick-headed! Mr. Lanard told me about Orne, you know, last Saturday night. I ought to have looked into the matter then. But I took it that there was nothing in it but cheap talk, and if those good fellows hadn't gone out of their way to-night to bring it right home to me, I might have kept on neglecting it until it made big trouble!

"Another thing, — maybe I ought to have struck while the iron was hot just now, and found out whether Rel Webb or Ben Cashman was mixed up with Lem Saunders's passing himself off as me. Who knows but we might have collared the whole bunch, sewed 'em into a bag, and put crimps round the edges right then and there!"

And twenty hours later Captain Jack was "kicking himself" again on this account, for Lem Saunders had failed to keep his appointment, and was out of reach. Scared into desperation, not knowing what Orne and Lorimer would do, Lem had left town and dropped completely out of sight.

However, Jack had a straight story to tell, and witnesses to back it. It seemed worth while to call on Mr. Lanard, as he had originally planned, and see if he was not willing now to listen to reason.

The old man was sitting alone in a small room which he used as a kind of office. Evidently his thoughts were not pleasant ones, not pleasant enough to keep, for almost the moment Lorimer entered, he tossed a letter across the table.

"Read that," old Lanard growled, "and see what a cussed fool a boy can be!"

This was the letter:

"MILLVALE, Nov. 10, 190—.

"MR. SETH LANARD,

"*Dear Sir:*—Understanding that you hold yourself responsible for the conduct of your little nephew, Benjamin Morse Cashman, we write to inform you that the child escaped from his nursery last evening, and made himself very much at home at a party given by one of our number. Of course a child could hardly be expected to understand that one does not go to such a gathering without an invitation; but since five other parties will be given by us during the coming winter, we request you will see that on those occasions Master Cashman is safely pinned into bed. Respectfully yours."

May Roxton headed the list of signers, but Rose Ahearn, Clare Bell, and the other three girls were

all there. Lorimer had hard work not to laugh as he read their long-worded slap at the fellow who had "butted in;" but old Seth Lanard seemed rather unhappy.

"Ben says he didn't mean anything worse'n a joke, and he wouldn't 'a' gone that fur if he hadn't thought likely the girls sent an invite that missed him somehow. He's goin' to beg their pardon. I wish you'd kind o' help him straighten the thing out. Course he deserves a trimmin' for his monkey trick, but I'd hate to have the young folks all get down on him!"

"Very well, sir," Jack answered. That was not saying much; but the old man knew it was not Jack's nature to slop over, and he seemed satisfied.

"How's things movin' with ye?" he asked.

"Couldn't be better, sir!" And Jack told the whole story of Lem Saunders's masquerade, the source of the yarns that had come from Orne's pool-room. Lanard shook his head solemnly.

"And the Saunders boy always went around with the Webb boy," said he. "Now, sir, Ben gets his tellin's to keep away from that Rel Webb — right now! I never liked their chummin', when Ben was here last year, and if I hear of their bein' together again I'll take a hosswhip to Ben, by gum!"

Jack laughed in his sleeve at the idea of one bad egg spoiling another; but the laugh got no

further. Just now there was business on hand, and he needed Lanard's good-will.

"Mr. Lanard," he said, abruptly, "I want to lease your field."

"Do ye? What fur?"

"I want to form an athletic club in and out of the high school that will keep things moving the year round! I want to build a small, inexpensive gymnasium that will give us a home for the winter, and the place to build it, of course, is near our gridiron and diamond and oval, — that is, the ground that accommodates our outdoor sports. Your field is large enough. I don't know of any other equally central that would give us the room we need. And I want to begin to build that gymnasium right away!"

Mr. Lanard smiled at first. Then he pursed his lips and drummed on the table. "Goin' to win that game, Saturday?" he asked, after what seemed a long time.

"I hope so, sir."

"Well, I tell ye," the old man went on, "there's been so much talk about it, one way and another, so many crooks and turns comin' up for ye and against ye, that I'm kind o' notional — call it superstitious, if ye want to — about that game. You win it, and then you see me again!"

"All right, sir," Jack replied. He was disappointed; but he knew that Lanard was no man to be hustled, and would be most generous when

he acted in his own way, at his own time. So he made the best of it, and even squeezed out a good-natured nod for Ben Cashman, who appeared just as Jack started to leave.

"Going post-office way?" Ben asked.

"Near it."

"I'll come with you, if you don't mind." For Ben realized that the first step toward righting himself with the girls he had offended was to get on friendly terms with Jack and seem to have his backing.

There was not much pleasure for Lorimer in that short walk, yet it had its effect upon his fortunes. Rel Webb, dodging along a side street, saw the two together, and jumped at the conclusion that a mean and treacherous nature would naturally reach.

"Chumming, eh?" Rel muttered. "That means that Ben's gone back on me, — within twenty-four hours, at that! Probably it was he put Lorimer on to Lem Saunders's scheme and busted it up before we'd worked it for half what it was worth. Never mind, Ben Cashman, — I know what you're planning for Saturday, and I'll see that Lorimer gets a chance to block your game!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRICK THAT PARTLY SUCCEEDED

Some "games" have to be "blocked," but others seem almost to reveal themselves. Of the latter sort was the petty affair recalled to Jack's mind next morning by May Roxton.

"I told you I'd find out who dropped that note inside my desk last Monday, — the note that told me to ask you about Josie Lee," May said, smiling victoriously. "It was Lem Saunders!"

"Do you know that, or do you guess it?"

May pouted. "Both!" she said. "The janitor just told me he saw Lem at my desk, but, since he wasn't taking anything out, concluded not to interfere. Poor Lem!" she said with a make-believe sigh, "he knew what a horrid flirt you are, and he was just so good-hearted he was bound you shouldn't deceive me!"

"That's right! What say if we advertise for him to come back and be thanked?"

"Yes, we'll have to hunt him up — after the game. There's enough on my mind at present!"

May said it in jest, and yet she was more than half in earnest. Just at present the game was the

great central event, with reference to which everything was fixed.

In the earlier game, Doverdale had defeated Millvale by only one point. That was on the Doverdale grounds. Now these well-matched elevens were to meet on the Millvale gridiron, both sides hopeful, yet both of them "guessing."

Friday night found everything looking well for Millvale, and Saturday dawned a bright, clear, snapping day, with just enough sunshine, as Terry McGrady said, to put a wire edge on. Of course the fellows took it easy that morning, avoiding practice and trying to think of anything but football.

Tom Lorimer knew of a hickory, three or four miles out of town, that the boys and the squirrels might have left a few nuts upon, and Captain Jack, Terry, and Jeff jumped at that excuse to get away from the storm-centre. They rode out on the electrics, rambled round awhile, picked up a few nuts and got their lungs full of fresh air, and then drifted back toward home at the rate of two miles an hour.

To the Lorimer place they came at last, feeling as though it was good to be alive, and without a real trouble in the world. The older fellows stood chatting at the gate. Tom ran up to the house.

"Hi, hi, Jack!" they heard him yell, a moment later, as he came dashing back. "Telegram for you!"

Jack tore open the envelope.

"'Meet me at Blank House, 2 o'clock,'" he read aloud. "It's from father," he muttered in a dazed way. "From Boston." In the first shock of the disappointment he crushed the envelope into a ball and started to tear the message in strips.

"Oh, shucks!" Terry cried. "Wire that you can't come!"

Captain Jack shook his head. "Father and mother have the first call," he answered. "Must be that father's getting back from Washington sooner than he expected, and something's turned up that he needs my help on. Wish it —" Then he gave himself a sort of shake, and squared his shoulders. "Well, what he says goes!" he cried.

"It's now about 12," Jack went on rapidly. "I can catch the 12.30, be in there ahead of time, and there's just a chance I may attend to this thing, whatever it is, and get back to the game. But don't count on that. Ben Cashman will play my position, of course, and he'll put up a good game, too.

"Better catch Ben, Terry," Jack added over his shoulder, "and go over one or two of our signal plays — only don't try to take up too much, and get mixed. If he has an idea of his own, use it — and back him up, anyway! Good luck to you, boys!"

With the last word the door closed behind Captain Jack. The two fellows left standing at the

gate looked at each other dismally. "We're licked!" Jeff said.

Captain Jack didn't think of it that way. He honestly believed Ben Cashman was as good a player as himself — the only difference being, as he modestly saw it, that Ben had had less practice in team work. Millvale could win, thought Captain Jack, and his only feeling was that of regret that he would not be able to help.

He fought down his disappointment, however, for the sake of the best father in the world, as he said to himself; and when he walked into the Boston hotel the message had named, nobody would have dreamed from his appearance that the erect, bright-eyed, sunny-faced lad was giving up a great pleasure for the sake of a small duty.

"Father here, Mr. Brady?" he said to one of the clerks he knew.

"Mr. Lorimer? Why, no. When he dined here the other day, just before he left for Washington, he told me he'd be back next Monday. Perhaps you have some later word?"

"He wired me to Millvale to meet him here at 2 o'clock."

The clerk looked puzzled. "Don't see how he's going to make it unless he has already reached the city," he said. "Make yourself at home, though."

There was an hour to wait, and it seemed about the longest hour Jack had ever known. He got his luncheon, but that took little time; for on the

day of a game a player's luncheon is not much more than "a sniff and a nibble," as May Roxton once described it. Then he went back to the office and paced up and down with his eye on the entrances, until his activity must have got on Mr. Brady's nerves. At ten minutes before two, that official called him over to the desk.

"Seems to me I'd wire your father's Washington address and make sure there was no mistake in that telegram," Mr. Brady said. "He's generally so punctual that, if he said two o'clock, I should have expected him to be here before this time."

"Good idea," Jack cried; and he turned across to the telegraph-office.

"Did you wire me meet you here? Rush answer," was the message he sent. Now he had two places to watch, and he divided his attention between the entrance and the operator.

The weary moments ticked themselves away. Now it was two o'clock — quarter after — half-past. The operator signalled him. Jack eagerly grasped the slip.

But what was this! Not his answer — and yet in one way it might be taken as a reply to both the telegram he had received and that which he had sent:

"Beware messages probably bogus Ben Cashman scheme take your place."

That was the telegram — a telegram dated "Millvale" and signed "O. A. Webb," which meant Rel

Webb, of course. And he had hardly read this when the operator signalled him once more. Jack snatched at the message, saw his father's name, and read:

"No. Return Monday as planned. Wire if anything wrong."

Captain Jack jammed the messages into his pocket, glanced at the clock and dashed for the door. Down the steps he ran, across the sidewalk, and dived into the nearest cab.

"Terminal! Make time!" he yelled to the driver.

There was a chance for him yet! If he could catch the train he had in mind — if the game was delayed a little in starting — he might get into the second half. For the trick on himself he cared little, but if Ben Cashman was selling out the team he should be thrown off the field!

An omen of luck, he did catch that train, with not a second to spare. And as he got his foot on the rear platform of the last car there flashed across his mind a way to save a minute more.

Everywhere along the marshes at the farther edge of Millvale there were stacks of salt hay at this season. He would risk a jump from the train and try to land on one! Then a run of an eighth of a mile across the marsh would bring him to the football field.

So when the train stopped at Millvale he kept his seat. But as it moved away through the tangle

of shops and factories that skirts the station he sauntered out upon the platform.

It was only three or four minutes to the marshes and the train was running slowly. He looked ahead. He could see several haystacks that stood near enough to suit his purpose. The danger was that the motion of the train would upset his calculations of speed and distance.

No time now, though, to think of that! At the worst, there was bare ground to fall upon, and a football player knows how to fall. All his senses alert, Captain Jack poised on the edge of the platform and tightened every muscle. A moment, now! Then he hurled himself outward and upward, eight feet if it was an inch, and landed safe, but sprawling, on the summit of the heap of hay.

He waved his hand to the terrified brakeman, who, just too late, had rushed out to the platform. Then he slid down from the haystack, shook himself together and started on a run for the football field.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN CAPTAIN JACK CAME HOME

MILLVALE was whipped. There was no doubt of that in anybody's mind. And it was not Ben Cashman's fault, either.

Not that he wanted Millvale to lose, but rather that he wanted the credit for her success, had Ben Cashman fooled Captain Jack into leaving town. Ben meant to show that he was the better player of the two. He did put up a brilliant game. But he could not inspire the eleven with that confidence in himself and each other with which Captain Jack would have paved the way to victory.

Fellows like McGrady and Bell, Harriott, and Janvrin would never "lie down," but somehow there was less snap than usual in their play. Nor was that the worst of it. By the time the first half was two-thirds over, it began to be evident that something was very wrong with Millvale.

Doverdale had gone in with a rush, hammered a hole through the left of the Millvale line and scored a goal from a touch-down. Well, that was the fortune of war! The Millvale fellows just

stiffened their backs and kept busy. Dangerously near to the Doverdale goal they carried the ball, and it seemed that in a minute or two the score would be even.

And just then and there Millvale was penalized for holding — set back fifteen yards.

"Sure you don't need to be quite so enthusiastic, Fitz!" said Terry McGrady, not ill-naturedly, to the fellow who had made them lose distance. Fitzpatrick, the sub promoted to Kavanagh's place, hung his head and muttered an apology. But out on the sideline Simon Orne, the pool-room man with money on Doverdale, slapped his thigh and chuckled knowingly.

Back and forward raged the tide of battle. At a critical moment Millvale was penalized again, five yards, because Fitzpatrick was off-side in a scrimmage. Doverdale kicked a goal from the field. With five minutes to spare, Ben Cashman got the ball, and, Collins interfering for him, made a heroic run around the end, to what looked like reaching distance of the enemy's goal.

Then Fitzpatrick lost his head again, or so it seemed, and openly tripped a man — and for a second time Millvale went fifteen yards to the rear.

The whistle blew for the end of the half — with Doverdale 10 to Millvale's 0. Even as it sounded, Jack Lorimer darted out from the farther sideline and faced Fitzpatrick.

"Off with that uniform, you cur, and leave the

field!" cried Captain Jack. "He's bought, boys! Orne's money is in his pocket!"

Then, as Fitzpatrick slunk away, Lorimer turned to Ben Cashman:

"We'll excuse you, too, Ben," he said, quietly. "Not that you're playing a crooked game, but you got into it in a crooked way — and straight's our principle!

"Better put Jeff Bussey in for Fitzpatrick, Terry," he added. "He'll be playing out of position, but he'll do his best, not try to sell us out! And now I'll get my own togs on!"

Now it chanced that while Captain Jack, surrounded by his enthusiastic players, was laying hasty plans to get the winning grip, Ben Cashman, sourly making his way from the field, had the ill luck to encounter Rel Webb. They had been pretty good friends, thanks to their common hatred of Lorimer, but just at present —

"Hello, Ben, how does it feel to get left?" said Rel Webb, jeeringly. "I called Lorimer home here to-day. That makes us square, I reckon! You gave away a scheme Lem Saunders and I had spent a good deal of time on, and —"

"You lie!" Ben interrupted.

"Liar yourself, and a sneak besides —" But at that point Ben used his fist to stop Rel's mouth, and Rel retorted with a stunning swing at Ben's nose. It was an interesting fight for a minute or two, though not a very scientific one. But then

it got down to rough-and-tumble, and while they were rolling over in the dirt and clawing each other, Jim Spinney, the special officer, came along and kicked them both into the road.

At the same time Orne, the pool-room man, was treating Fitzpatrick as a rascal always uses his tools — laughing at him.

"You lasted quick," said Orne. "You done the business, though, so what do you care? Ten to nothin' is a lead they can't get over!"

Yet, little as he knew of football, he must have realized when the Millvale fellows came out for the second half that there was a new spirit in their ranks.

They forced the fighting. Old plays and new tricks came in such swift, bewildering variety that Doverdale knew not what to look for, and neither her strength nor her tactics availed to check the steady advance of the Millvale men.

To the ten-yard line they came. Then all at once, in a second it seemed, it was all over but the shouting, and Jeff Bussey broke the Doverdale line, Lorimer, with the ball, coming through behind him.

Nor did Doverdale rally again. Virtue seemed to go out of her players as they met the fierce determination of Millvale. Doggedly they resisted, it is true; but they could not keep the ball in Millvale territory. Their goal seemed continually in danger.

Smashing away at them with deadly persistency, Millvale carried the ball to the five-yard line. One scrimmage at that point was repelled. The next, and Doverdale wavered and went down, with Lorimer tearing through her for a touch-down. As he had kicked the other goal, so he did this.

Once more the teams lined up. Doverdale had lost heart. Millvale kept her steadily on the defensive, and under the constant strain the weak places in her line were becoming elements of panic. There was one particular spot that Captain Jack had signed Terry to attack. The formation was ready; the signal was half-uttered; but then the whistle blew.

Score — Millvale 12, Doverdale 10.

Then for the first time Captain Jack looked up at the reserved seats to see if a certain few were present. May Roxton was there. So were Stacy of the Outlaws, and Stacy's sweetheart, making noise enough for half a dozen — cheers, perhaps, that provoked Simon Orne to vent an extra curse as he went back to his pool-room. Seth Lanard was there, too.

But no, he was not there. He was climbing down over the seats, boy fashion, and rushing across the field to Captain Jack.

"Say, Lorimer!" he bellowed, "you'll do! I like a feller that turns round and whips, after he's been licked, I do, by gum! You go ahead and build your gymnasium!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE ATHLETIC CLUB

For that scurvy trick Ben Cashman had played on Captain Jack and the eleven he deserved to "get his come-uppance" — yet he escaped it. To punish him would be to bring the whole matter to the attention of his uncle, Seth Lanard; and though nobody would have hesitated a minute to shame the boy, nobody wished to grieve and humiliate their faithful old friend.

Ben heard some energetic remarks on the subject; but for three or four days he kept out of sight as much as possible, and, as Lorimer desired, the thing began to blow over. Meantime Ben and Rel Webb made up their quarrel, neither having any friends to spare; and when, in the interest of that new gymnasium, Lorimer called a meeting to organize an athletic club, Cashman and Webb attended it together.

A notice on the high school bulletin-board had invited to this meeting all athletes who were sixteen years old or over. The same invitation had been sent to the fellows at DeArmond's, a small preparatory school with which the high school was on very good terms.

But if they were in the club, as they expected to be, Rel and Ben thought it ought to be rather swell. The thing they were afraid of was that Captain Jack and his crowd would not make it "select" enough. So they were going to the meeting to represent the aristocracy and stick up for their own "class."

"It would be just like Lorimer to drag in the duck that takes care of our furnace!" Rel Webb growled. "Lorimer is no such a much himself, his folks only keep one girl, and I s'pose he'd say the furnace hand is as good as he is — and maybe he is. But father's always telling me I must make common people understand I'm their superior."

Ben Cashman shook his head gloomily. "You're in luck," he said. "You have backing. My father and mother aren't here to help me out, and Uncle Seth's such an old mossback, believes everybody ought to work with his hands, and all that, that I have to keep my opinions pretty quiet. I wouldn't put up with his notions a minute, if — well, Uncle Seth's pretty well fixed, you know!" he added, meaningly.

Thus the young snobs drivelled conceit as they made their way to Columbia Hall. They might have used more violent language if they had known that Captain Jack had made it a point to call on Stacy, the quarter-back of the Outlaws, and urge him to attend the meeting.

"But I'm twenty-two years old!" Stacy argued.

"Oh, it's not too late for you to reform!" laughed Captain Jack. "Why should you get into training? Because you want to be an all-around strong man. You've a magnificent chest and arm development, but I'm betting that if that young lady of yours ever gets mad and takes after you, you'll find you can't run half a mile!

"Seriously," Lorimer added, "my idea was to take in fellows from sixteen to twenty-five. The older ones may not want to do our wonderful stunts, or keep at it so constantly as we will, but they'll ballast us, with their practical experience, when we seem likely to go up in the air. So I want you to come yourself and bring a lot of your kind, clean men you know are all right."

Accordingly, as Rel and Ben found to their deep disgust, Stacy had come, with his friends. They stood around quietly, and a stranger would have said they were entirely harmless. But Rel could not forget the speed and thoroughness with which some of these very fellows had expelled him from his own football team, and the sight of their bronzed faces and broad shoulders made him nervous.

Captain Jack called the meeting to order.

"I'm not going to make a speech, fellows," he said. "I'll just remind you that there's no gymnasium in Millvale — none, that is, that we could all join, since the gymnasium at St. Paul's parish-house, for instance, is for members of that society.

Now some of us think there's room for one that would be open to almost any decent fellow who wants to keep in condition or build himself up, and who can get along pleasantly with other fellows.

"If we were all agreed about a gymnasium, I suppose the first thing would be to form an athletic club to build and control one. Speak of an athletic club, and we naturally think of teams and contests. Well, I'm going to be frank with you about my part of it," Lorimer added with a smile.

"I'm a high school student, and I shall probably continue to play with the high school eleven and nine. Very likely most of our fellows would feel as I do, that their first duty of loyalty was to the school. Same way with the DeArmond men. But that needn't prevent this club from forming teams, baseball or football or any other kind, and bringing out a lot of new men who, I hope, would make us school players hustle to keep up.

"There are sports our schools don't touch, such as rowing and basket-ball and others, that a new athletic club could boost. I'd like to get in on 'em myself, and I'd do my best for the club colours. But the club would be worth all it cost if it did nothing more than stand behind the gymnasium. We do need a gymnasium to help us train for systematic development. We need it now. And I hope this meeting will make it a sure thing!

"Gentlemen, what is your pleasure?"

"I motion you keep on bein' chairman!" Jeff Bussey cried in the midst of the applause that followed Jack's little speech. And then there was more applause.

"I move we proceed to organize the Millvale Athletic Club," said Sewall Ford. The motion was seconded and carried.

"Mr. Chairman, are we to consider that all now present are charter members?" asked Jenks Dawson, a DeArmond fellow.

"Is there any objection to so ordering?" Lorimer asked.

"Mr. Chairman!" Rel Webb had arisen. "Considerations of propriety demand that we should pause!" he said, impressively.

Rel was seldom at a loss for words, big ones, and he got off a long rigmarole about congenial associates, "defensible exclusiveness" and the "better classes," that did not tell exactly what he was driving at, but made everybody feel insulted and uncomfortable. He moved a committee on membership to select and report the names of "desirable" persons.

"Oh, beans!" drawled Jeff Bussey. "Guess if we can stand you, you oughter be able to get along with us!" And in a roar of laughter the motion died.

Ryerson Legate, the athletics manager of the DeArmond school, who was acting as secretary, read a simple code of by-laws, which several of the

fellows had made up beforehand, and it was adopted. Then the election of officers was in order. Captain Jack called for nominations for president. Everybody spoke at once.

"Lorimer!" "Jack Lorimer!" "Captain Jack!" It sounded like a general yell.

"Mr. Lorimer is nominated," announced the secretary. "Any other nominations?"

Again Rel Webb rose. Perhaps Rel's judgment was not first-class, but his courage was good, and this time he left out the long words and came closer to earth.

"Mr. Secretary," he said, "complaints have been made, I have heard them more than once, and I have made them myself, that high school athletics are in the hands of a clique. Friends of the clique are favoured. Fellows who will not sink their independence and knuckle to the boss are kept off the teams."

A few hisses were heard, and one or two laughs, but most of the fellows seemed willing to give Rel rope. He kept on:

"Without pursuing this subject into unpleasant personalities, I ask you, Mr. Secretary and friends, whether it will not be wise to divorce this club at the outset from any suspicion of one-man rule? I think it will be, and therefore I nominate a gentleman of standing, a gentleman of experience, an accomplished athlete, and one who has kept himself

entirely free from factional entanglements — Mr. Benjamin M. Cashman!"

"Any further nominations?" the secretary asked. "Then I declare nominations closed. How shall the vote be taken?"

"Move we vote by written ballot," said Webb, and Fitzpatrick seconded the motion.

Then while the secretary was appointing tellers and providing them with slips of paper for ballots, Rel worked hard. There were fellows he believed he could influence; some who had been displaced from teams because better players came forward; some whom Jack had had to discipline; some who were under obligations to Cashman or to Webb himself, and ought to be willing to pay the debt. Rel talked with every one.

He did not expect to defeat Captain Jack. But if Cashman got a big vote, that would be a black eye for Lorimer, and something for his enemies to build on when they undertook to make more trouble.

Fully believing Cashman would get such a vote, Rel listened eagerly and hopefully as Matt Janvrin rose to announce the result of the balloting.

"Whole number of votes, eighty-six," read Matt; "Ben Cashman has ten; Jack Lorimer has seventy-six, and is elected!"

CHAPTER XIX.

LANDLORD, BUILDER, CAPITALIST — AND HUSTLER

Rel Webb scowled as the crowd applauded. Ben Cashman had more self-control, and more sense. He joined in the applause.

"Get up and move to make the election unanimous," he whispered.

"I'll see you hanged first!" Rel growled.

"Then I'll do it myself." And Cashman did it in a graceful way, thereby making a good impression on a number of fellows who had been suspicious of him because of the company he kept. It pays to come up smiling after one has been knocked down, a lesson Rel never seemed able to learn.

Elections went on. Hans Anderson, a timekeeper at the Eagle Mills, was chosen vice-president, with Ryerson Legate of DeArmond's as secretary and treasurer, and Oscar Stacy of the Outlaws as sergeant-at-arms. The four officers, together with Tom Bell, Terry McGrady, and Jenks Dawson of DeArmond's, were made the executive committee, to have the general management of the club.

"Now, what about that gymnasium?" suggested President Lorimer.

Ned Harriott rose. There was a suspicious twinkle in his eye.

"Mr. Chairman," he said, "I think the most accomplished hold-up men in this bunch have already been put at the front. So I move that the executive committee be a building committee, with full power to plan and build a gymnasium, and authority to get the money by highway robbery or any old way!"

"Second the motion!" yelled Jeff Bussey. It went with a rush, everybody laughing and clapping at Harriott's wording of it. But when things quieted down a little, President Lorimer said:

"It might be a good scheme to authorize the building committee to add to their number. There are fellows here whose advice would be valuable, or who" — he added with a smile — "have a pull at pocketbooks we couldn't reach!"

So it was ordered; and after a little while the meeting broke up, though not before Captain Jack had called the officers together for a minute, and put through the plan he had in mind when suggesting additions to the building committee. Then he dodged the fellows who wanted to talk to him, and walked over to where Ben Cashman stood all by himself.

"Going home, Ben?" he said. "I want to see your uncle to-night, if I can."

Cashman looked at his watch. "Well, you might catch him," he answered. "He generally goes to bed when it gets dark under the table; but there's a chance. Yes, I'll ride out with you. Had some notion of dropping in for a game of billiards, but Millvale billiards is the kindergarten brand, so I'm always willing to duck. When I was in Vienna — "

He started a long story of a wonderful player he met in an Austrian café, a story that had only fairly begun when they boarded the electric, and that lasted more than half-way to Lanard's. A dull yarn it was, too. It seemed as though Ben was talking against time, to prevent the mention of less agreeable subjects.

"We've put you on the building committee, Ben," Captain Jack said, quietly, when at last he got a chance to speak. Cashman started with surprise. "You've seen more than the rest of us, and you ought to be able to give us some good points."

Cashman was silent for a minute. "Well, I'll do my best," he said at length. Then, after another interval of silence: "See here, Lorimer!" Captain Jack turned toward him.

"I — I — perhaps I haven't been quite square with you," Cashman muttered. "What say if we wipe it out and start over?"

"With all my heart, Ben!" Captain Jack replied. "I'm not hunting scraps, ever, and I'm always glad to settle one. Say no more about it."

Time would show whether Ben was sincere or not. He could never deny that Jack had gone out of the way to give him another chance — doing it partly in the interest of the new club, partly out of regard for his uncle, and partly for Ben's own sake, for he had his good qualities and might as easily be a leader and a favourite as to be at outs with everybody. All Jack would ask was that he "play fair."

As they left the car and started toward the Lanard homestead, "Lorimer luck!" Ben cried; and he pointed out the light in Seth Lanard's little office. "Almost looks as though the old man had been sitting up for you."

"Come in with me, Ben," Jack said. They entered the room together. Old Seth seemed pleased to see them so, and Lorimer promptly made the most of it.

"Couldn't wait till morning, Mr. Lanard!" he said, gaily. "Had to run over to tell you that the new athletic club is under way, and we're all ready to start on the gymnasium. Ben, here, is on the building committee."

"Is, eh?" the old man chuckled. "Well, I'd enough sight ruther have him with your crowd than with that pesky varmint Webb! Every time I see a Webb I want to set the dog on him! But what are you boys after? More money from your poor old uncle?"

"We wouldn't refuse it, sir. But what we want

at present is to make sure of a lease of your field."

"You shall have it," Lanard answered. "I'll get it fixed up to-morrow, to the — the Millvale Athletic Club, is it? All right. Rent'll be a cent a year, or thereabouts. All is, if there's a buildin' boom strikes that neighbourhood, I'll depend on you to see that I don't get left too bad.

"Time old folks was in bed," he added. "Glad to put ye up for the night, Lorimer. Think ye can't stay? Well, that lease'll be ready to-morrow night — and good luck to ye!"

Actually it was only half-past nine when Jack left Lanard's, and, though he would have been starting for bed, ordinarily, he resolved to steal an hour and try to get a few more things settled. Luck was with him again, for as he approached the Roxton place he met May's father, the very man he wished to see.

"Want to engage you to put up a gymnasium for the Millvale Athletic Club, Mr. Roxton, and do it quick!" Captain Jack cried.

The big contractor smiled. "Come in and we'll talk about it," he said. "No, we'll walk up and down till I finish this cigar. Now, what about the gymnasium?"

In a few words Lorimer told what was wanted. He had pretty clear ideas on the subject, for he and the fellows had talked it over a good deal, and Mr. Roxton did not need to ask many questions.

"If it wasn't so late in the season, I'd tell you to take a month to think over your plans, and then get half a dozen estimates from as many builders," he said. "As it is, you ought to get the frame up and covered without any delay. I could use those plans I showed you, and by adding a few feet to your dimensions I could work in some material I have on hand, and save you time and money. Will that suit you? Very well.

"If Lanard has told you the land is yours, I'll put a gang on to-morrow morning and rush the foundation. Lucky we've had no frost to speak of! Bring your committee round to my office to-morrow night and we'll fix up details. I can see myself going broke on this job," the contractor added, jovially. "If I undertook to make any money out of a scheme you're mixed up in, May and her mother would have my life!"

He wanted Jack to come in, but the lad declined. The Roxton house was too hard to leave! He must be getting home. But only a block or two farther on he was halted by another friend, Mr. Arkwright, a member of the Millvale School Committee — the member, in fact, upon whom the high school athletes relied to protect them from the active unfriendliness of one of his associates, Rel Webb's father.

"Good evening, Lorimer," Mr. Arkwright said. "We see too little of you. Anything new in athletics?"

"Yes, sir; the Millvale Athletic Club was organized to-night — mainly for the purpose of building a gymnasium."

"Ah! I suppose you're active in it? One of the officers, perhaps?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where will you get the money to build the gymnasium?"

Jack laughed. "From our friends, we hope," he answered.

"Put me down for fifty dollars, then," Mr. Arkwright said. "If subscriptions come slowly, don't hesitate to tell me, that I may have the pleasure of increasing mine."

"Thank you, sir."

"When is your next football match?"

"Saturday we play Winterton High — a return game. We defeated them before, 16 to 6. That's our only fixture at present, though we are in correspondence with two or three school teams."

"Winterton, eh?" Mr. Arkwright said, thoughtfully. "I've understood that a rather unscrupulous type of sport flourishes in that locality. Look out for yourself — and success to you!"

With so many good wishes, such substantial proofs of friendship, to raise his courage, Captain Jack was tempted to feel that Winterton and everything else ought to be "easy." Yet Saturday told a different tale.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN WINTERTON WAS BOUND TO WIN

MILLVALE	WINTERTON
Bell, l. e.	r. e., Mott
Bussey, l. t.	r. t., Cassidy (Mack)
Bacon, l. g.	r. g., Parkhurst
Janvrin, c.	c., Abt (Cook, Gill)
White (Cashman), r. g.	l. g., Jones
Collins, r. t.	l. t., Brenton (Wells)
Elverton, r. e.	l. e., Sullivan
McGrady, q. b.	q. b., Stein
Ford (Chapin), l. h. b.	r. h. b., Fairfield
Lorimer, r. h. b.	l. h. b., Bellows
Harriott, f. b.	f. b., Sale (Rooney)

"SURE, the players themselves are bad enough; but the rooters they've brought along — 'tis not the high school they graduated from, but the reformatory!" muttered Terry McGrady.

Indeed, it was a hard-looking crowd that stood for Winterton and its high school.

When the Millvales visited Winterton some weeks earlier, winning by 16 to 6, the home team had put up the kind of game that makes an expert long to get at an eleven and lick it into shape. There was good material, but it had been improp-

erly placed, insufficiently trained, and was handled on the field with very poor judgment. Nor did Winterton people seem to care much whether the team won or lost.

To-day in the preliminary practice the Winterton fellows moved with a vim and precision that showed they had had some coaching. It was a different team in every way from the listless and "wobbly" crowd that Millvale had met before. In fact, it was so different in some ways that it made Captain Jack suspicious.

"These all your own men — high school students?" he said to Stein, the visitors' captain. Stein gave him an odd look.

"Sure," he answered. But then he moved off as if he didn't want to talk. Captain Jack ran his eye once more over the players — stalwart chaps, three or four of them, who looked as though they would never see their twenty-fifth birthday again; and then for the second time he sized up Winterton's representatives on the side-lines.

There were not many fellows who looked like students; but there were twenty or thirty men — some of them quiet, carefully dressed men with keen eyes and cold, hard faces, others who were loud and flashy and "sporty." These people weren't travelling for their health. It was safe to say they had never been connected with the school and did not figure as alumni supporters. What were they after, then?

Like a flash it came to Captain Jack. They had taken up the Winterton High team as a gambling proposition; had braced it with "ringers," probably, got it properly coached, and now were making money by steering it up against other school teams and winning bets on the games.

Well, that was only his idea. He couldn't prove it, and he couldn't go very far on bare suspicion. However, he could prevent anybody being robbed. He signalled Jim Spinney, the special officer, to come one side.

"Jim," he said, "you remember these are private grounds, and we don't allow betting." The policeman nodded. "Another thing, keep your ears open, and if you hear any talk about Winterton players who haven't any right to be on the team — aren't students — speak to me between the halves."

Then he walked over to a guest who was in a different class from the Winterton crowd — Harry Lee, the captain of the Four Corners' Indians. A week or two before, Captain Jack had invited Lee to come to Millvale over Sunday, and to-day, with Winterton's agreement, Lorimer had asked him to act as referee. Winterton named the umpire, and just at present the two officials were chatting about details.

"Any time Captain Stein is ready, gentlemen, you may let her go," said Captain Jack. But then,

all in an instant, the smile faded from his face, and he turned swiftly toward the side-line.

"Two to one that Winterton wins!" he heard. "Take it in ones, fives, tens, twenties, or hundreds! Chance to show your sporting blood and back your own team, gentlemen! Two to one on Winterton!"

It was one of the flashier sort of visitors, who was speaking to a little group of Millvale people. His voice was not loud, but there was a rasp and a buzz about it that made it pierce the air like the note of a mosquito, and spectators who were farther away than Captain Jack pricked up their ears and went nearer.

Jim Spinney, the officer, was in the front of those who hurried forward.

"Shut up, you, or get out!" he said. "These are private premises, and ground-rules forbid gambling!" The fellow only grinned, and did not speak; but it was no less a person than Captain Stein of the Wintertons who undertook to smooth things over in his interest.

"Of course, you haven't any business to bellow around like that, Joyce!" he said sharply to the gambler. "If you want to make a few bets on the quiet, without annoying anybody, I don't suppose the officer would interfere with —"

"You try it, and see if he wouldn't!" Jim Spinney broke in, grimly. "As I told you before, these are private grounds, nobody enters 'em except by the courtesy of the club, and the club doesn't allow

betting or gambling in any way, shape, or manner. You can get over in the road there and yell your throat sore and bet your shoes off, if the officer on the beat will stand for it; but if you begin it here I'll throw you out so quick you'll think you never came in!"

"That's right, Spinney," said Captain Jack, quietly. Stein, the Winterton captain, turned on him.

"Say, is this a football crowd or a Sunday-school class?" he cried.

"So far as we're concerned, it's a football crowd — without any crook annex," Captain Jack replied, as quietly as he had spoken before. He looked Stein straight in the eye. After a minute the other captain turned away.

"Well, let's do something besides chew the rag!" he growled. "What's the matter with playing football?"

Then both teams played it hard for twenty minutes, in a way to uncover more weaknesses than they had learned of, probably, in all the season before.

For example, on the Millvale side, Janvrin at centre was a favourite and vulnerable point of attack. Collins, right tackle, got swept off his feet more than once. Bell and Elverton had tough times right along, for when Winterton made an end play the runner was always backed with three or four

men, so that they were up against the hottest kind of interference.

But the fault of Winterton as a team was its failure to get up speed. Millvale was lighter, but the fellows came in on the jump and had the start of the Winterton line in almost every play. They stopped many that Winterton's superior weight should have carried through.

Her weight — and her tactics, it might be added, for she was out to win by any means. Ford, who was in the game for the first time since his return from Denver, got kneed within five minutes, and was replaced by Chapin, who had played his position, left half, in earlier matches. White collapsed with a bad ankle, a few minutes later, and Ben Cashman came in as substitute.

The rascals did their slugging and trampling cleverly. The umpire never saw it, and though Harry Lee was fairly in the middle of every mix-up, he could not prevent it, nor could he actually have sworn it was intentional. Twice he forced the setting back of the Wintertons, but they were ready to take chances, and they only grinned at such a penalty.

In another way, man-fashion, Captain Jack was taking chances, too, improving every opportunity. Twice, when there seemed an opening, he tried for a goal from the field — and both times missed. But his men had their teeth set to "hold 'em," and

they were bound that, if they could not score, neither should the others.

But could they not score? As the half neared its end, they braced themselves for heroic efforts.

Hitherto the ball had been in Millvale territory most of the time. They had been on the defensive. Now, with their revolving attack and double passes and straight, smashing, line-bucking — a combination that, as they worked it out in swift and varied changes, no man could fathom or guard against — they forced the ball up the field.

At Winterton's 25-yard line the vsitors got the ball on downs; but at their first assault on the Millvale line the ball came into the home team's hands again.

Half-luck, half-alertness, it was that then turned the trick. In the crash of the attack, somebody dropped the ball. Captain Jack pounced on it. Before the writhing knot of players was half-untangled, before most of them realized that the ball was not somewhere underneath the mass, he was speeding toward the Winterton goal.

Sale brought him down, but it was on the two-yard line. The next play put him over, and a second before time was called he kicked the goal.

Score — Millvale 6, Winterton 0.

Bruised and battered, but happy, the Millvale players straggled back to their benches. Jim Spinney, the policeman, halted Captain Lorimer on the way, and whispered in his ear.

As the young player listened, his face hardened and his eyes began to gleam. His fist clenched and unclasped as if the muscles acted of themselves. But he did not speak until Spinney had finished what he had to say.

"Thank you, Jim!" he said. "Better be ready for trouble. I'm going to call 'em down — hard." Straight over to the Winterton group he went, and into the midst of it.

"Captain Stein," he began, "when we played and defeated the Winterton High School team it was agreed that we should play the team once more. Before this game began you, as captain and manager, the man who made the earlier agreement, assured me that the eleven you had brought to the field was the Winterton High eleven, composed of your students. You lied!"

Stein sprang forward with a furious oath, his face blazing red. Captain Jack lifted his hand.

"Just a minute," he said, quietly. "Your tackle, Cassidy, is a college player whose real name I won't mention here, though I shall give it to the manager of his own eleven. Your left tackle, Brenton, is Kid Marsh, the prize-fighter. Your centre rush, Abt, was imported from Allentown, Pa., and given work in your father's foundry, in order that you might use him in the team. Your full-back, Sale, is a Boston man. Not one of the four ever had a shadow of connection with Winterton High."

Stein seemed to think he could treat the matter lightly and brazen it out.

"Oh, well, every manager strengthens his team when he has a chance," he answered, with a nervous laugh.

"Every manager doesn't get games under false pretences and then try to lie the thing through afterward," Captain Jack said, crisply. "For the honour of school athletics, your style of management is not very common. Decent men won't use it. Neither, let me tell you, will they allow it to be used at their expense!

"There's one way to settle this matter, just one," Captain Jack continued. "Pull out your ringers and play your own men or this game ends right here!"

CHAPTER XXI.

STEIN'S BABY BUNCH IN HARD LUCK

ALREADY Captain Jack and Stein were the centre of an excited crowd.

The Millvale fellows were there. The referee and umpire had walked forward. Jim Spinney, on the edge of the group, was saying nothing, but keeping his eyes busy as he slipped in and out of places that looked dangerous. And two or three of the home team's stoutest friends, fellows like Stacy of the Outlaws, who scrupulously respected the laws of the field at other times, had somehow got an idea that there was a chance of a muss, and were edging up toward the disputants, prepared to take Lorimer's part.

For the benefit of all Captain Jack repeated what he had said to the captain of the Winterton team. Then he turned to his own players.

"Is that right, fellows?" he asked.

"That's right!" "Sure!" "We're with you, captain!" Such were some of the replies that greeted him. Not a man hung back or hesitated to answer.

"Yes, that's all right, till this intermission is

over!" sneered Stein. "But two minutes after the referee has ordered you to play, and you've refused, the game will be forfeited to us! I guess that's right, too, ain't it, Mr. Referee?"

All eyes were on Harry Lee, now. There was no shade of weakness in his firm and even tones.

"On the statement of facts made by Captain Lorimer, and not disputed by you, I shall not order Millvale to play!" he said.

Kid Marsh, the prize-fighter, alias "Brenton," swaggered forward a step or two.

"A peach of a referee yous are!" he said, menacingly. "Dat's quite a bluff for a little boy to throw!"

"Oh, I guess I can back it up," Harry answered, calmly. He turned his back on the fellow, and addressed the captain of the Wintertons.

"As I understand, Captain Stein," he said, "Captain Lorimer offered you a reasonable alternative. He agreed to play the Winterton team; that is, any eleven made up from your students. Do you consent?"

"I'll ask my — I'll consult my — see a friend of mine." Stein seemed to be in a terrible stew. He broke away from the group and ran over to the side-lines, and there was hurried and anxious talk between him and two or three of the cold-eyed, hard-featured men who had come with the team.

Captain Jack grasped the situation at once. If Harry Lee, as referee, had been simple enough to

declare the game forfeited, the Winterton gamblers might have claimed the bets they had made. The question with them was, whether they should call bets off, or take chances of winning with the regular team, the fellows who had a right to play under the name of Winterton High.

"Oh, be a sport!" Captain Jack heard one of the men say to another. "There ain't many sure things in football, anyway, and we don't know but Stein's baby bunch will give us a run for our money!"

Evidently this man, for one, was willing the game should go on. As for Captain Jack, he didn't care whether it continued or stopped. He was heartily sick of the whole Winterton gang.

Finally Stein, or his backers for him, decided to play. The second half began.

But it might more correctly be said that it was Millvale that played — played with Winterton. Now the visitors were thrown back upon their own resources, with no attendant thugs to run risks and do dirty work, they put up a poorer game than on the occasion of the first match with Millvale.

Millvale made two touch-downs in the first six minutes!

"Sure there's one for each of us, and a very good boy can have a couple!" muttered Terry McGrady to Matt Janvrin, in the moment of preparing for a kickoff.

But it was not quite so bad as that, in the end,

simply because, after the hard strugle of the first half, the fellows were willing to take it easy, and Captain Jack was willing they should.

There was nothing to hinder, on the Winterton side. After the first size-up of her opponents' mettle, Millvale did not even bother to kick the ball out of her territory. She simply massed her men and ripped through the Winterton line as if it had been so much blotting-paper.

Stein himself helped to demoralize his players. When he saw his case was hopeless, as he soon did, he lost his head. From cursing Millvale under his breath he went to raving and swearing openly at his own comrades.

Finally he applied a vile name to Cook, his centre rush, and the offended player came back at him with a smash in the mouth that dropped him like a shot. Cook was sent out of the game, but sympathy was with him, and the incident helped to complete Winterton's disgruntlement.

Millvale was tired of carrying the ball by the time the whistle blew.

"Sure we're all growing round-shouldered!" chuckled Terry.

Score — Millvale 29, Winterton 0.

Even before the half ended, the betting men from Winterton had faded out of sight. They had dropped Stein the minute he ceased to be of use to them. Evidently he felt it keenly.

But though he had tried a crooked trick, he had

been beaten at it, and there was no need of "rubbing it in." Captain Jack did his best to make things pleasant for the visitor during the little while before train-time. But all Stein seemed to want was a chance to crawl into his hole.

One thing he said at parting that suggested he had had a good lesson in square sportsmanship.

"Guess you were right, Lorimer," he muttered. "Sorry we had any unpleasantness about this!" Captain Jack met him half-way as he always met a defeated foe.

"No hard feeling on my part, Stein," he answered. "Come back next year and we'll give you another chance to trim us!"

But privately Captain Jack thought that that "trimming" was in the far, far distant future. For one thing, until Stein learned to control himself he was not very likely to captain a team that would win.

CHAPTER XXII.

THOSE WHO WERE IN THE RUSH-LINE

"Since Miss Roxton didn't go to the game, part of the game had to come to Miss Roxton!" said Captain Jack.

On that Saturday evening after the game he had taken his visitor, Harry Lee, to call on May. Saturday evenings were generally pretty lively at the Roxton place, for May was popular, and her father and mother were fond of young people, and, when school was off their minds, those young people did not have to think very long in order to decide where they wanted to go.

Terry McGrady had already arrived, escorting his sister, Nora, and Rose Ahearn. Tom Bell and his sister, Clare, came a minute after the two captains, and Ned Harriott was no farther behind than he usually was where Clare was concerned.

"But indeed 'tis early yet!" Terry said, as if in apology, as they greeted Harry. "The rest of Millvale High, the seniors and juniors, that is, will meet you here before the evening's over!"

"Everybody's at home here, thank goodness!" May retorted, gaily. "Make yourself so, Mr. Lee!" Then she took Captain Jack's arm and, leading him

forward under the chandelier, turned him around and around.

"Jack Lorimer!" she cried in mock dismay. "A split upper lip, and a black and blue right ear, and a big cut over your left eye, and a bruise on your jaw-bone, and —"

"You ought to see the rest of him!" Tom Bell burst out, before he thought; but then he blushed and hoped nobody heard.

"What have you been doing to yourself, Jack Lorimer?" May demanded.

Jack smiled at her, rather painfully, because of the split lip.

"Didn't do it to myself," he answered. "Things happened to be coming my way for a minute. Never mind about me, though. Did you see that fine old aunt of yours, and is she going to build our gymnasium?"

"She is going to help." May took some money from her purse. "She sends you her love and twenty-five dollars, does Aunt Marcia, and she says you just wait till she gets her January dividends!"

"Bless her heart!" Captain Jack exclaimed. "I'd rather have her good-will than her money — though just at present I want that, too!"

May pretended to sigh. "Oh, yes, just at present, we're all perfectly shameless about money!" she told Harry Lee.

"Fact is, Harry, we're all in the rush-line!" Captain Jack added. "And Millvale's been scored

on, a good many times, this last week or two! That reminds me," he went on, "Oscar Stacy told me that he and Hans Anderson talked with Mr. Bird, the chief owner of the Eagle Mills — funny combination, isn't it? — and he subscribed two hundred and fifty dollars."

"Mr. Bird is well named," said Terry, solemnly, "Let the eagle scream!"

"Yes, we'll have to have some fudge on that." It was May who spoke, and, disappearing into the dining-room for a moment, she came back with a heaped-up platter.

"This is my fudge, Captain Lee," she said. "I frizzled over the range, to make it, and even the football players are supposed to eat at least one piece! It's free to my guests, of course, but papa and mamma have to pay a cent for every piece they take. That cent goes into my gymnasium fund!"

"Sure, the end justifies the meanness! Eh, Mr. Roxton?" said Terry.

The head of the family had paused at the door a minute on his way along the hall. Smiling at his young friends, he took a piece of candy from the platter, as May offered it, and put down a cent in its place.

"She's robbing me right and left, these days," he said. "I've wondered that she never proposed to rip the stuffing out and let the boys have this house for their gymnasium!"

"Speaking of that, wouldn't it have been cheaper to rent than to build?" Lee asked Captain Jack.

"We looked the whole town over, and couldn't see a chance to do better than we are doing," Lorimer answered. "In the business section, the few desirable places commanded enormous rents, and, outside it, we couldn't find property that wouldn't have called for expensive refitting.

"Then it's an advantage, as you can see, to have the gymnasium within a step of our diamond and gridiron and oval, our whole layout close together; and it's another strong point, that we'll be in our own home, that nobody can turn us out of. Again, of course a gymnasium is a mere shell of a building. You'd be amazed to know how little money our friend Mr. Roxton is charging for the work. And somehow people are more willing to help build than they would be to help fix over an old place."

Before Lee could answer, Terry addressed him, speaking in the smooth and innocent way that veiled his deepest roguery.

"Now ye know it all," he said. "A wonderful head for the gymnasium business has Captain Jack! But sure 'tis rather disgraceful, the way he slams it into the innocent public!

"He goes into a store on Main Street. 'I'm after building a gymnasium,' says he; 'give me what money ye have in the shop. What, is this all?' he says. 'I'm a poor cripple,' says the man, 'and a gymnasium would be no use to me at all.' 'Ah!'

says Captain Jack, 'but ye're a public-spirited citizen, I see it in y'r eye; so run out and borrow all ye can for me, and I'll mind the shop and take what comes in while ye're away.' And the poor man goes!" Terry ended impressively.

Jack laughed. "Terry wouldn't dare to tell you some of the money-raising stunts he's put through, himself, lately," he retorted.

"'Tis my modesty is the curse of my life!" was Terry's grave rejoinder.

"You've done a pretty big thing, among the lot of you," said Mr. Roxton, from the doorway. "I never would have believed the money would come out the way it has! You've got about enough to pay for your building, right now. Keep things moving a few days longer, and you'll be able to fit the place up and make a beginning on a sort of maintenance fund."

"Sure we need no fund," Terry commented. "If we ever run short, 'tis only to send out Captain Jack with his sand-bag!"

So the evening passed, all too quickly for Lee, in merry talk that was sensible, too, and that frequently "meant business;" and when he went away with Lorimer, bearing a warm invitation to come again, he was rather inclined to envy the fellows and girls who lived in Millvale.

"Wish you were here to stay, Harry!" Captain Jack said. "But, bless you, you don't have to go

away from Four Corners to find our kind of folks. They're everywhere, in any town. You know that! The whitest fellows and the sweetest girls in the world are right here in New England!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOMETHING TO SELL AND SOMETHING TO GIVE

FRIENDLY to everybody and feeling like a millionaire, because almost everybody seemed willing to help, — practically, too, with money, — Captain Jack passed a busy and cheerful week. But the next one opened disastrously. Sixty dollars, three twenty-dollar bills, had somehow slipped from his hands; nor could he tell whether he was the victim of a theft or a sufferer from his own carelessness.

The sixty dollars represented subscriptions for the new gymnasium, collected by the middle class of Millvale High. Not half the fellows in that class were old enough to join the new athletic club, and of course the girls couldn't become members anyway, but they had all taken a generous, unselfish interest in the scheme and had appointed a committee to "help boost."

Jeff Bussey, on behalf of that committee, handed over the bank-notes just before school began. Lorimer sealed them in an envelope bearing his own name and address and put it in an inside pocket.

That was all right as far as it went. But unfortunately there were papers relating to his school

work in that same pocket, this was the day of a French test, the contents of the pocket had to be taken out a dozen times between nine o'clock and two o'clock, and, when it dawned on Jack that the envelope was no longer there, he could not even tell at what hour he had seen it last.

The school had been dismissed, and most of the pupils were on their way home, by the time he had finished rummaging desperately through his desk and the waste-basket. All he could do, then, was to ask the janitor to keep an eye open for that envelope while sweeping and dusting. Then he made tracks for home, resolving to stay there, on the chance that some one had picked up the envelope on the way out, and, thinking he had already left the building, would fetch it to him.

He had avoided the fellows, that he might plan a course of action. But the situation was perfectly simple, after all. He considered himself responsible for that money. He had an allowance from his father of one dollar and fifty cents a week. Provided he never spent a cent, he could repay the sixty dollars in just forty weeks.

Of course, he couldn't expect the club to wait that long, though. He would have to get some kind of work outside school hours and earn the money. That meant that he would have to drop athletics.

But when he got to that point, he stopped thinking, and began to whistle to keep his courage up.

Spite of Jack's splendid self-control, some of his

perplexity and distress must have shown in his face. Fitzpatrick, riding by on the rear platform of a street-car, turned his head for a second glance, and then yelled at him tauntingly.

"Dropped something, Lorimer?" Fitzpatrick said.

That was an invitation to brace up, or at least Jack took it that way. He forced the money out of his mind and went into luncheon with no cloud on his brow. Tom, his brother, promptly introduced a new subject.

"Say, Jack," he began, "the Junior Millvale Athletic Club wants to hire the gymnasium!" he said. Jack smiled.

"What's the conspiracy, Tommy?" he inquired.

"Why, us fellows under sixteen, not old enough to join the big club, have started one of our own. I'm secretary and treasurer and committee on headquarters!" Tom added, proudly. "I can make the deal with you right now!"

"No, you can't. It wouldn't be fair to the other fellows for me to act in such a matter without consulting them. Wait till we have something to let."

"Why, the gymnasium's 'most done! Anyway" — as Jack laughed — "they've got the frame up! and there'll be more'n forty million dinky little clubs wanting to hire it, and if we don't get in early we might get left!"

"Don't you worry, young man," Captain Jack

replied. "The High School Athletic Association has hired the place for its meetings, with the privilege of using it at such other times as may be agreed upon, but we don't intend to tie ourselves up with many such arrangements. Of course, the high school association and the athletic club will be sort of partners in the field and track, each having its own days; but the gymnasium's a different proposition. You never heard of a landlord renting himself out of his own house, did you?"

"Well, you ought to give us a fair show, while we're growing up," said Tom. "First thing you know, we'll be old enough to join your club, and then we might take revenge and turn you out."

"Oh, I'll see that your crowd has the first chance. Trouble is, fellows of your age need an instructor more than you need a gymnasium. I'd be satisfied to see you working in 'most any old shed, if we could find the right man to show you what to do and what not to do. Wish somebody would name one to me!"

"Mr. Mains."

Josie, the maid, had entered at the very moment, to announce a caller. "He's asking to see you, Master Jack," she added.

"There's your physical director, Josie says," chuckled Tom. Smiling himself at the odd way the name fitted into his talk, Captain Jack walked into the hall.

It was a singular figure that rose to meet him.

Twenty years old, perhaps, not more than five feet five or six, Mains was so broad-shouldered and heavily built that at first glance he seemed dwarfed. But when one saw the lightning quickness of his movements — even his sentences were clipped short and came out with a jerk — and when one studied his shrewd face and his keen, bright eyes, one speedily concluded that in some ways he was taller than he looked; that there was really a good deal of him, and that he was "all there."

"Mains, from Maine," the newcomer smilingly announced. "Want to sell you a push-ball."

"A push-ball!" Captain Jack repeated. It was the very thing he had had in mind. He had already written to Boston and New York to see if he could find a bargain in a ball that had been used — for a new one costs fifty or sixty dollars — and he had meant to pay for it, in part or wholly, from his own savings.

But now, if he had to make up that sixty dollars, the thing was out of the question as far as he was concerned. And he did not feel like advising the fellows to spend their money for a ball, for they had never played the game, and might not take to it. He shook his head rather sadly.

"I'm afraid we can't trade, Mr. Mains," he said. "Fact is, the way I'm fixed at present, if you were selling six dozen push-balls for a cent, I couldn't buy one seam."

Mains laughed. Then all at once his expression

changed. He started going through his pockets. First he would slap one on the outside, then he would dive into it and pull out all kinds of truck — a fishing-line, for instance. Lorimer watched wonderingly as Mains pawed over the queer collection that a busy or careless man carts around with him. But it was in the very last pocket he emptied that Mains found the thing he sought.

"Seems to be yours!" he said as he held it out.

Captain Jack almost jumped for it. It was that very envelope addressed to himself, in which he had sealed the sixty dollars, and it was still unopened, just as he had left it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WITH SOAPY AS A DEADLY WEAPON

LORIMER looked from the envelope to Mains, and from Mains back at the envelope.

"I don't understand," he said. "You found it?"

Mains nodded. "Called at your school — letter of introduction to principal — asked him the star athlete in town — heard about you — picked this up near the gate coming out — took it as a straight tip to chase you," he rattled off. "Wouldn't bother you in school-hours — didn't know whether the letter amounted to anything," he added.

Captain Jack opened the envelope and displayed the contents.

"My luck!" said Mains, with a comical grimace. "Might have been half-way to New York by this time! What about push-ball, now? Twenty takes it!"

"You'll sell it for twenty dollars?"

Mains nodded.

"Good, sound article?"

"Made it myself!"

"You play the game?"

Another nod from Mains.

"Suppose I bought the ball, would you be willing to throw in a little coaching? I never saw but one game, and never had any practice."

"Coach anybody, anything, anywhere, for board and lodging — till I strike a steady job! Like to get into that new gymnasium. Know enough to teach a little, and ain't too proud to sweep out!"

Lorimer laughed. He liked his visitor's brisk, decided way and his frank and earnest face; but he wanted to know more about him before going very far.

"Maine's a big State," he hinted. "Where did you hail from, and what's your business?"

"Born in Bangor," Mains answered. "Lived in Augusta and Lewiston and Portland — Portland last. No folks. No home. Been working my way through Blank Academy." He named a well-known institution. "Had charge of athletics. Trustee threw me down and out — hard! Crooked work. Lying low till I can prove it. Came to Millvale to see a forty-second cousin. Like the place. Like to stay!"

"What's your best game?" Captain Jack asked.

"Get most fun out of rowing and hockey. Play baseball, catcher — football, tackle. Fair runner. Pretty good boxer. Hate to show off, but you name your article and I'll try to deliver the goods!"

It seemed all straight enough, and the case looked better still when Mains displayed a copy of the

letter of introduction he had brought to Principal Blaisdell. The principal of the academy he had attended vouched for him in the strongest terms as a lad of sterling character and fine abilities.

Captain Jack thought he could almost see his way clear to "use Mains in his business." But first he went back to the subject they had originally discussed.

"To tell the truth," Lorimer said, smilingly, "I suspect I'd be a chump to buy a push-ball now! Here it is the last of November, and the fine weather can't last for ever. We might have a big snow-storm any day. Of course we could use the ball indoors, but what I was thinking of was to give the fellows some sort of an open-air game to fill in between football and hockey; and whether — "

"Push-ball lays over football; more fun," put in Mains.

"Is it lively enough to keep a fellow warm?"

"Every time — especially if he's warming the other fellow!"

"Let's see, now." Captain Jack took out his memorandum-book and drew a diagram. "A football field is 330 feet long and 160 feet wide," he said. "A push-ball field is 360 feet long and 150 feet wide. Well, we could make out the extra thirty feet of length all right. But the builders have dumped material all along the inner side of our field, and whether we could get that 150 of width without having a lot of stuff shifted is a question.

"Tell you what," Captain Jack added; "we'll run over and take a look at the field, if you want to, and then — where's the push-ball?"

"Cousin's house — Burton Street."

"I'll look at it, anyway."

Burton Street was on their road to the grounds, and it was not many minutes before Mains had his push-ball out of its box and inflated. As the great sphere rounded out, Lorimer gazed at it with admiration and wonder. It looked strong and substantial in every inch of its six feet of height, and yet it was not the heavy and clumsy thing Captain Jack half-expected it to be. Possibly it would have weighed sixty pounds — not more.

"You made that yourself?" he questioned.

Mains nodded. "Not the rubber fabric, understand," he added with a smile. "Bought that. Made the push-ball. Easy enough. Always liked to tinker."

Lorimer twisted the ball around and rolled it over and over, and studied every seam. He could not find a flaw, anything that did not look neat and workmanlike.

"I'm satisfied," he said at length. Mains deflated the ball and returned it to its box, and they set out for the field.

Now, as luck would have it, this was an afternoon when Rel Webb had started to have fun with Soapy Smith.

"Soapy," whose real name was Archibald —

though no one but his teachers ever used it — was a white-faced, round-shouldered fellow, with a soft voice and the smoothest kind of manner. He toadied to Rel and did his errands, and Rel kept him supplied with cigarettes, candy, and soda, and once in awhile volunteered to "lend" him a quarter — which the other fellow gratefully accepted.

But Rel, though willing to use him, had the contempt for Soapy that everybody has for a sneak. When Rel was out of temper Soapy caught the rough side of his tongue, and when Rel was in a teasing humour Soapy was the first one to be tormented.

On this afternoon Rel had struck out a new amusement at Soapy's expense. At the edge of the sidewalk in front of Webb's place was a hydrant, and Rel was using it to put his toady through some original exercises. Lorimer and Mains came along while the exhibition was going on, and Mains seemed to take considerable interest in it — all the more, perhaps, since he was a stranger.

Soapy had vaulted the hydrant, back and forward, five or six times with Rel snapping a whip, ringmaster fashion, and occasionally slashing his legs. Then Rel ordered him to get up on the hydrant and "do a pose."

Even with the whip to nerve him, getting up and staying there was a task for Soapy, who was no athlete and not very steady on his feet. And when

he undertook to carry out Rel's next command, to "wave his leg," he instantly fell off.

Rel gave him a cut with the whip as he spread out on the sidewalk. "Up again, and do it right!" he ordered, with a malicious chuckle.

"I can't, Webb!" Soapy whined.

"Up, I say!" Soapy made a desperate scramble, and by chance succeeded in balancing himself on one foot on the knob at the top of the fire-plug.

"Stand on your head!" Rel commanded, with a menacing flourish. Soapy looked down despairingly. The best balancer living could not have done that trick under the conditions. Soapy swallowed a sob and looked at Rel and his whip beseechingly.

And then the fellow from Maine came into the game.

"Don't know what your other name is," he said to Rel Webb, "but I call you a low-down cur!"

Rel scowled at the speaker and at Lorimer, his companion.

"What business have you to butt in, sawed-off?" he growled.

That was a fighting word with Mains, it seemed. He clenched his fists and took a step forward. But then his eyes rested on Soapy Smith, still balancing desperately on the top of the hydrant. In the next moment he had caught Smith by the neckband and the trousers, lifted him clear of the hydrant and flung him bodily into Webb's face.

It was a short flight that Soapy took, but he

landed hard. Arms extended and clawing the air, feet trailing out behind, he went into Webb as though shot from a catapult. No human being could have stood that shock. Webb went off the sidewalk into the road, and Soapy, scratching and snarling like a mad tom-cat, half-insane with bewilderment and pain and terror, landed on top, sprawling all over him.

Mains grinned cheerfully and turned to speak to Lorimer.

But then all in an instant his expression changed. Before Captain Jack could fairly realize his intentions, Mains had leaped out where the two fellows lay and grasped each of them by the collar. One mighty double-handed heave, a feat of strength that struck Jack speechless, and Mains threw them both up on the sidewalk — just as an automobile whizzed over the spot where they had fallen.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LITTLE TROUBLES OF A LEADER

"'Twas the auto was in danger — not Rel Webb and Soapy!" said Terry McGrady.

"How's that?"

"Sure if it had steered for their heads, 'twould have collided with Rel's cheek," Terry explained. "And if the machine had tackled low, 'twould have crumpled up against Soapy's gall!

"Oh, but I'm not saying 'twas a small thing you did, Mr. Mains," Terry added, still with that wicked twinkle in his eye. "I think we'll have to hang Soapy on your Christmas tree!"

It was an hour or two after the scene at the hydrant. Captain Jack and his visitor, going on to the football field, had met Terry and Tom and several more of the fellows, who were passing a ball and "pretending it was summer," as Bell said; and the captain had introduced Mains all round, incidentally telling how he had punished Webb and, in the next instant, saved both the tormentor and his victim.

"Biggest thing I ever saw," cried Captain Jack,

" the way Mains snatched those two fellows up on the sidewalk! It was lifting dead weight, from a cramped position and without even a foot-brace, and I doubt if there's another man in this town could have done it!"

" Let it rip," the stranger muttered, looking uncomfortable. So Captain Jack respected his modesty and changed the subject a little.

" I've been telling Mr. Mains," he said, " that we fellows never interfere between Rel and Soapy, not that we're afraid of Rel, but because we know that Soapy doesn't really want to be torn away from his boss, and would put up with almost anything, sooner than lose him. That right?"

" That's right," they all agreed. But as Tom Bell added, they thought more of Mains because, not knowing how matters stood, he had taken the smaller fellow's part.

Ben Cashman did not say much. He had been Rel's chum, and probably did not feel like talking against him. But lately it had looked as though he had split with Rel and was trying to establish himself with the athletes, and, though he was not popular, the fellows were giving him the fairest kind of a chance.

He came to the front right away when push-ball was mentioned.

" It's great!" he shouted. " Played it in Los Angeles, one winter. There's room enough here for it, Lorimer. Oh, sure. More than 150 feet

between that nearest pile of finish and the edge of the road, and if there wasn't, why, we could move the pile." All of which sounded as though Cashman liked push-ball.

"Say we shift our football goal posts — it would have to be done anyway, as I understand — and see how we come out," Tom Bell suggested.

For push-ball, the goal posts, eighteen feet in height, are placed twenty feet apart, with the cross-bar seven feet above the ground. That sounds easy; but to pull up the posts and set them over again, in the right places, was no small job, and it was dark before it was finished. It proved as Ben had declared, that there was space enough.

"We'll have a little practice here to-morrow afternoon if it doesn't snow," Captain Jack said as they prepared to separate. "Mr. Mains and Ben will put us on to the points of the game, and if the snow still holds off, I'll ask you, Tom, as president of the school athletic association, to name two teams for a match on Saturday. Why not go outside the school for once, in compliment to our visitor, and make him and Cashman captains?"

"Good idea."

"Say, Lorimer, if it's fixed that way, I want you on my side!" Ben Cashman broke out.

Captain Jack laughed. "Mustn't tamper with the ballot-box!" he said. Then he spoke more seriously.

"Drop around at my house to-night, if you can,

fellows," he said, "and pass the word to White and Kavanagh and the rest. For entertainment, Mains and Tom will put on the gloves — this is the first they've heard of it, but I guess it'll be all right — and for business we'll sort o' call the roll and find out if there's any more gymnasium money in sight.

"We can just about clear Mr. Roxton's bill, with what we have," he went on. "That gives us the bare building — or not quite so bad as that, because it will cover heating and plumbing. But there'll be a lot of extras we don't think of, and apparatus to buy, and, as Mr. Roxton said, we want to start a maintenance fund. I've set my ambitions at fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars. Looks big, I know, when we've raided everybody we can think of, and subscriptions have begun to fall off — but there wouldn't be much fun in living, if we couldn't put through a big thing once in awhile!

"This is the first emergency call," Captain Jack ended with a smile, "and so I'm making it to our own particular crowd. DeArmond's fellows, and Stacy and Anderson and their friends, will have a chance to beat us, if they can, later on. And that's all, till we get something to strengthen our stomachs! — Mains, I want you to come home with me!"

Two hours later, when the fellows began to gather in Captain Jack's "sanctum" — a big, bare room in the ell, where the boys could "tear

the house down," as Mrs. Lorimer said, without disturbing anybody — Lorimer joyously exhibited a twenty-dollar bill.

"There's a new subscription, one per cent. of the two thousand dollars!" he said.

He did not tell them that Santa Claus was coming ahead of time, but this was what it amounted to; for Captain Jack had asked his father and mother to give him as much as his Christmas presents could possibly cost, and "let the presents slide," and they had done so.

Then Ben Cashman came forward with another twenty dollars.

"Found a letter and a check from father when I got home to-night," he said.

And to this display of wealth Jeff Bussey added ten dollars.

"Cal'lated to chip in again, anyhow," he drawled, "and that bill won't grow any bigger by my hangin' on to it!"

This seemed to be the end of collections for the evening. But then the fellows went over their lists of contributors, questioning who was "good for" more than he had given, and whether any possible contributors had been left out.

"Have to shake down Uncle Seth again," Ben Cashman concluded. But Captain Jack looked doubtful.

"I'd hate to do it, Ben," he said. "Mr. Lanard's been our most generous friend already."

"I'll tell him that," Cashman answered, quickly. "It's worth fifty at least. It'll charm his pocket-book right out of his trousers, you see if it don't!"

The lists disposed of at length, the fellows took up the fascinating subject of apparatus for the gymnasium. They had talked over this matter of equipment a good many times, but it never got stale. Every time it came up everybody had some new ideas, and to-night Mains from Maine offered many good suggestions, so many that he won the hearts of the crowd.

Or, perhaps it would be better to say, of most; for somehow Horace White and Sewall Ford seemed rather to resent the attention that was paid him.

Captain Jack was used to that sort of thing. Long ago he had learned that every change in a club or team means more or less friction. Seldom do all the fellows take to the new man, and there will always be some for whom he doesn't care.

Not always does friendship grow up from intimate association, either. Thus in the Millvale High football team Terry McGrady and Dan Collins had very little use for each other, and Tom Bell squinted whenever he looked at Phil Kavanagh. Yet they were all good fellows, and all willing to pull for the team, and a leader's business was to hold them so loyal to it that the little personal differences would have no chance to grow.

It was by doing this that Captain Jack showed

his capacity for leadership. True, as everybody said, he was the best all-round athlete in the region; yet no fellow has any right to take the front place on that account alone. The important thing was that nobody else had Lorimer's knack of managing men.

To-night he thought he saw how to smooth down White and Ford, and when the real business was over he went to the point.

"Like to see you and Tom Bell with the gloves on, Mr. Mains," he said. "Tom's our champion. Knocks the stuffing out of me every time I do anything that doesn't suit him!" And when the general laugh at this had died away, Captain Jack added:

"And I say, to-morrow night or the first time we can arrange it, I want you to see Ford and White spar. You won't find a better matched pair in Millvale, or two fellows who give any livelier, cleaner exhibition. That right, boys?"

Everybody said that was right, and Horace and Sewall, feeling more cheerful than they had been, looked on with as much interest as the rest, as Mains and Bell put on the gloves.

It looked as though Tom had the advantage of the stranger, for he had the longer reach and his more wiry frame suggested that he might be quicker on his feet. But it soon proved that Mains could block and side-step in a way that made things even.

On the other hand he got through Tom's guard and landed at least one uppercut that made his teeth rattle. And when Tom abandoned a body blow to stop a right jab for his eye, Mains got in with his right heavily on Tom's nose.

Mains seemed to have an exhibition programme, so to speak. He showed his footwork, his ability to lead, his stoutness at defence, his alertness in a mix-up, each as though he had marked out a certain minute to display a certain quality. Tom was clearly out-pointed; but that is not to say that he failed to give Mains a lively time of it, and Tom's partisans whispered that if this had been fighting instead of sparring there would have been a different story to tell.

And yet those sledge-hammer blows that Mains showed he could strike — well, if a man lost his head and got a few where they would do the most good, that would be the end of him.

Anyhow, the two boxers ended with a hearty respect for each other, and when Captain Jack's little party broke up they went off together, busily discussing the science of the game.

"Say, he's a beaut, this Mains from Maine, ain't he?" Tom Lorimer said, enthusiastically.

"He surely is, Tommy," was Captain Jack's answer. "I almost think I know where I'm going to find a place for him!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FIRST AND LAST OF PUSH-BALL

MAINS'S TEAM		CASHMAN'S TEAM
Bussey	Forwards	Cashman
Collins		Lorimer
Scott		Kavanagh
Reed		McGrady
Janvrin		Ryan
Bell	Right Wings	Bacon
Wallace		White
Mendelssohn	Left Wings	Mott
Lefranc		Hamilton
Mains	Goal-keepers	Elverton
Harriott		Chapin

THAT was the line-up Tom Bell suggested, after a good deal of study, for the first game of push-ball. It took in all the football team and the best of the subs, and, everything considered, it seemed a fair division of the men.

If Cashman's team was stronger in forwards, Mains's team was perhaps better off for wings, and certainly stronger at the goal; and Mains himself, a man thoroughly posted, ought to count heavily for his side.

But every man on each team felt confident, and — the best sign of all — every one liked the game. After two afternoons of practice, they thought it the best fun they had ever found.

"But sure," said Terry McGrady, "we must heat a poker and burn the record of this into the wall — else our grandchildren will never believe we played push-ball, in the open, at this time of year! 'Tis like — sounds like — a swimming-race on New Year's Day!"

It was true that luck was with them, for weather. Indian summer had come back, "for this occasion only," and because the day was so fine, and hints of a novelty had gone around town, the fellows had an attendance such as they never expected.

The high school crowd had turned out in force; DeArmond's fellows were all on hand, and Seth Lanard was stumping around the field as lively and interested as though he had been six years old instead of sixty-eight.

"Oh, I'm gittin' to be a hot sport, I am!" the old man chuckled, when Captain Jack ran over to shake hands with him. "Kind o' like to mix in to this game myself! Say, ye don't have to kick that ball, do ye?"

"Couldn't kick it very far, I'm afraid, though there's no rule against it," Captain Jack answered. "We have a right to get it across the field in any way we can, and we can block the other fellows anyhow except by tripping. Watch the line-up

and the start, Mr. Lanard," he added. "I think you'll say it's a catchy beginning."

Indeed, there is no game that starts more picturesquely than push-ball does, and as the two teams took position the spectators applauded lustily.

On the 40-yard marks are placed the forwards, five for each side. On the 20-yard lines are the wings, four to a team. The defenders of the goals are posted on the goal lines.

When the whistle blows both teams rush for the ball, each endeavouring to secure it and run it down the field. And here Cashman's forwards got the advantage.

Probably the swiftest sprinter on either team was Jeff Bussey of Mains's. He was the first to reach the ball. But his companions had not kept pace with him, and he could not handle the proposition alone.

Cashman and his forwards arrived with a rush a second later. Ryan tackled Jeff. The other four propelled the ball to Mains's 30-yard line before they were blocked by Mains's wings and his rallying forwards.

Then Cashman called up his own wings, heavier men than the forwards, and it was actually push-ball for a few minutes, with both teams braced against the sphere and neither able to advance.

But this is a game in which strategy counts. It pays to give a little ground sometimes. All of a

sudden Cashman waved away his left wings. At the same time, though the fellows on the other side of the ball did not see it, he had motioned his goal-keepers forward.

Mains's players got a move on when the weight of two opponents was withdrawn. The ball went back a few feet toward Cashman's goal. Cashman's men seemed to be yielding, and the fellows on the other side got a little careless about their footholds and started to do the business right up.

Then all in a moment Cashman's goal-keepers, his heaviest men, coming down the field on the jump, struck the ball obliquely, broke it away from Mains's brace, and hustled it over toward the support of their own left wing.

Fairly on the run the ball went down the field, under the impetus given by the four players. The rest of Cashman's men held Mains's fellows from going to the defence of their own goal.

Yet, indeed, it seemed that Mains and Harriott did not need much help. Instead of waiting for the ball, they charged it when it was five yards from their goal, switched it away from its possessors, and trundled it almost to the centre of the field.

Cashman's fellows took it then once more. By sheer strength, luck helping, they got the ball back to the five-yard line; and then, though Mains's goal still seemed impregnable, they scored a safety, two points, by putting the ball across the line, outside the goal posts.

"So much for so much," said Captain Jack, cheerfully. "Now we'll camp down, and see if we can't stay in their territory."

Following the safety, the ball was brought out to Mains's fifty-yard line, and Cashman's team, having a free rush, lined up at the centre, ten yards back of it. Mains's men, whose goal line had been crossed, were required to line-up at that point, and not to start until the referee signalled for the rush.

Down the field with the ball came Cashman's forwards, the left wings running a little wide, the right wings gradually closing in. Mains's forwards came up on an easy, strength-saving run, to meet them. It looked as though the ball was heading straight for their goal.

But all at once the attacking line swerved sharply to the right. The head of it, Cashman and Lorimer, kept on with the ball, and joined their right wings. The other three forwards, with the left wings, tackled Mains's men.

Another switch, and now the Cashman leaders were headed for the goal, with only its keepers to oppose. But Cashman's vanguard did not wait this time for Mains and Harriott to offer battle. Lorimer jumped for Mains, the more dangerous, and brought him down.

"Now!" cried Captain Jack, as they came to earth.

"Up with her, boys!" yelled Cashman. And he

and his comrades got under the sphere and heaved it into the air as if it had been a feather. Harriott leaped for it desperately, but he was just a second too late. The ball went over the cross-bar for a goal that counted eight points.

That made the score 10 to 0 in favour of Cashman's side. And now again the ball was brought out to the centre, and on the opening rush Mains's forwards took it.

There was a good deal of a mix-up in the few minutes immediately following, and in the course of it Ryan forgot himself and tripped a man. That meant a penalty, ten yards lost distance for his side.

Only a few minutes later, Mott offended in the same way, or at any rate the referee thought he did; and this exposed his side to another penalty, the flying wedge.

This meant that, with Cashman's fellows lining up behind and bracing the ball, Mains's team, starting at any distance and approaching at any angle, might crash into their defence.

Of course a head-on attack would have amounted to nothing, for then the men behind the ball could have held their brace. But Mains's fellows, lining-up at the centre, pretended such an assault, meaning to take their real course too late for Cashman's players to change position.

The ball was on Cashman's twenty-yard line. So sure was Mains of success that he left Harriott alone to guard the goal, and himself led the charge.

A strong and splendid run his fellows made. Swerving at the last moment, they smashed in from the right and drove the ball out of the hands of its defenders.

But almost on the instant Cashman and Lorimer and McGrady were in front of it again, and on their five-yard line blocked every attempt to push the ball under the cross-bars or to throw it over.

Eight of Mains's fellows were trying to hold the Cashman crowd, while Mains and Bussey forced the ball forward. But at every moment somebody broke out of the "box" and got busy around the ball. It seemed to be fated to spend the afternoon between the five-yard and ten-yard lines.

Then all at once the whistle blew. It was the end of the half.

"So near, and yet so far!" laughed Mains, waving his hand toward the goal-line.

"Better luck next time, old man," said Captain Jack.

"It's bully fun, anyhow," Ben Cashman said, as he wiped his heated face; and to that everybody agreed.

"Let's escort old Betsy Jane down to the centre, where she belongs, and then take a walk around the block to cool off," Kavanagh suggested. He and White trundled the push-ball down the field, and then they and all the others hunted up their friends among the spectators. The ball stood alone, with no one very near.

Ten minutes was none too long for intermission, when everybody wanted to talk about the new game; and the time passed with peculiar swiftness for Captain Jack, who was busy making Mains acquainted with the fellows and girls. It seemed they had barely turned away from that struggle between the lines when once again the whistle was calling them to position.

But that was no great hardship. They were enjoying the afternoon. Lining-up in the jolliest humour the two teams surveyed each other and glanced at the ball.

Then some of them rubbed their eyes and looked again.

"Say!" Jeff Bussey yelled across the field, "What's the matter?"

He might well ask that. The big sphere was shrinking, fast diminishing, before their very eyes!

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHEN CAPTAIN JACK TURNED DETECTIVE

"SOMETHING wrong!" somebody signalled the referee. The fellows ran forward. Mains, back at his goal, did not understand at first that the delay was on account of the ball, but when he got an inkling that something had happened to his masterpiece, he came up at a gallop. Everybody made room for him.

"Can't understand," Mains muttered, and his face as well as his words expressed deep bewilderment. For a moment he only stood and stared blankly.

"Don't move it!" he ordered. Some one had made a motion to end the ball over. Mains put out his hand and steadied it as it was, and then he looked across at Captain Jack.

"Seam ripped, Lorimer?" he said. "See, please." And on his own side of the ball he started to look at every place where the segments overlapped, testing each seam with his eyes and his fingers.

"Can't understand!" he said again. And his perplexity increased when Lorimer made his report.

"All right on this side," Lorimer said. "Better take the sections one by one, now, and look between the seams. She's leaking yet."

That was evident. The ball was growing smaller all the time. The flabbier and more wrinkled the surface became, the harder it would be to look over, and the two fellows hastily began their new inspection.

Peering from top to bottom, each soon dismissed one segment as flawless.

"No rip there," Lorimer muttered. "And in this one, I guess — hello, here you are!"

"I've found it!" Mains cried at the same moment. He ran from one side to the other, and back again.

"Something went right through!" he declared, excitedly. "Not knife cuts — don't look like bullet-holes! Anybody hear a gun or revolver fired?" he demanded. Nobody had heard any such sound.

Mains studied the rent on his side again and more carefully, shaking his head as though it stumped him.

"Bullet would make a cleaner hole!" he repeated. "Even a long-range rifle — fired at a distance — so we wouldn't notice the report — "

"I'll tell you, Mains, what made those holes," Lorimer interrupted. "It was a slug from an air-gun!"

"Might be!"

Captain Jack and Terry McGrady exchanged

glances. The same thought was in the mind of each.

Rel Webb had an air-gun, an expensive and unusually powerful weapon of its kind. He would not hesitate to take chances on using it in this fashion to cripple a game of theirs. But it was not noiseless, though as nearly so as an air-gun can be; and the question was, how he had managed to send a slug into the ball without being detected at once.

"Better have the referee announce that the game is postponed — declared a draw — on account of an accident to the ball," Captain Jack suggested.

"Another thing," he added; "don't mention that theory of mine, fellows. It's only a theory, of course, and we don't want to expose anybody to suspicion. At the same time, it'll be easier to hunt the thing down if we let the impression go abroad that we think the ball gave out of its own accord. Understand?"

Everybody understood, all pledged themselves to secrecy, and Captain Jack knew that with these fellows that promise would be more than kept. In fact, two or three of them set out at once to make sure that the right kind of explanation got started.

"A break between two seams," they told their friends among the spectators. That was true — though it was not the whole of the truth.

"Of course it hurts your pride as the builder of the ball to have that story go out," Captain Jack said to Mains. "But you're as much interested

as we are to go to the bottom of the business, and we mustn't let the man behind the gun suspect that we've caught on."

"Right!" Mains answered. He was busyng himself in emptying the ball and folding it.

"Easy enough to patch!" he reported, cheerfully.

"Guess the fellow who made the holes is the one to see to that," Captain Jack replied. "Here goes to try to land him!"

The sleuth in the story-books disguises himself and assumes a darkly mysterious manner. But the only change Captain Jack made was to put on his coat over his sweater, and then he strolled toward his friends as if there was nothing on his mind and he hadn't a care in the world.

Though it had turned a little chilly as the sun sank, a good many of the high school crowd were still waiting to be joined by the players. Lorimer walked up the edge of the field, along the roadside, exchanging greetings, but making no long stay in any place.

He had his eyes and ears open for anything that might give him a point, but nothing seemed to come his way. And as he neared the upper edge of the field, opposite the dressing-room, he got a "facer" that almost upset his theories. Rel Webb was there! He stood beside Nora McGrady, Terry's sister, and never had he worn a more innocent, uncon-

cerned expression than he now presented to Captain Jack.

"Hello, Lorimer!" he cried. "What's gone wrong with that thingamajig of yours? Busted?"

"Little break — have to be cemented," Captain Jack answered in an indifferent way.

"Bully game," Rel went on. "I've been standing here all the time, watching it — and being entertained by Nora," he added with an exaggerated bow. The girl did not seem to appreciate the compliment.

"I never asked you to stay," she retorted.

"Ah, but this was the best place to be," Rel answered.

The words were harmless enough. Rel might have meant nothing more than a bit of flattery. But there was a hint of a sneer in the tone, and it seemed to Captain Jack that there was mockery in Rel's glance.

Of course that was the best place to be. Nora could help him to prove an alibi. But on the testimony given by his eyes and voice, Captain Jack mentally convicted the fellow. If he had not done the damage, he knew who did it.

A thought flashed through Lorimer's mind. Why not bluff a little? He shrugged his shoulders and slapped his hands together.

"Pretty cold, standing around," he said, carelessly. "If I'd been you, Rel, I'd have kept the carriage to go home in." Rel took the bait.

"I wasn't in —" he began. Then he stopped short and tried to recover himself.

"I should have said, I haven't been in it for days," he added, trying to speak lightly. "I don't drive, you know, I ride."

The two fellows looked each other in the eyes for a minute. Captain Jack smiled knowingly and contemptuously. Then, lifting his cap to Nora, he walked away.

"It was a Lem Saunders kind of a trick," he mused. "But Lem's out of it — absent and excused, so to speak. Now, who would Rel be likely to get to use that gun?"

He mentally called the roll of the scamps and sneaks that Rel commanded. Not Orne, the pool-room man, for Orne was in jail for selling liquor without a license. Not Fitzpatrick, the former football sub, for he had been out of school, ill at home; not —

All of a sudden Captain Jack stopped short and slapped his knee.

"He's my huckleberry!" he muttered. "We'll just investigate the movements of Mr. Soapy Smith!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A CLEAR CASE OF KIDNAPPING

"JACK,"said May Roxton, "I'm going to tell you some good news!"

"Stump you!" Lorimer answered. "There isn't any such thing!"

He had dropped in at May's because he had promised to take a book to her, but he had refused to remain. He was no company for man or beast, he said, and he was going home to bed.

But though May was one of the very few to whom he always showed his real feelings, he did not tell her why he was so blue to-night. The truth was, however, that he had made a failure in the detective line, and he was rather ashamed of it.

Ever since he left the grounds he had been trying to get on the track of Soapy Smith; but Soapy seemed to have vanished as completely as though he had been snatched up into the air. No one had seen him since noon.

As a last resort, with some vague idea of scaring the truth out of him, Lorimer had just called for him at his home. There he had been told that

Soapy (or Archibald) had started for Rel Webb's more than an hour earlier. Yet, ten minutes or so before he got that word, Captain Jack had met Rel on the street alone. Soapy seemed to have made another quick disappearance.

So for the present Lorimer had given up the pursuit as a bad job. To give up anything always vexed him. He was very grumpy to-night. May had exercised her privilege of telling him so. Then, however, she had decided to give him something pleasant "to go to bed on." And so —

"I saw Aunt Marcia to-day," she said. "She's got some money for you — for the gymnasium. She sold some property a day or two ago and she decided she wouldn't make you wait for her January dividends. She was going to give it to you at Christmas, but I persuaded her not to wait for that, either, so she's liable to send for you any day. Guess how much you'll get!"

"Fifty dollars?" said Lorimer, hopefully.

"More than that!"

"A hundred?"

"More than that, too! But I guess I won't tell you just how much. Go home and dream about it!"

Yet, as it turned out, home was no place to dream just then, for hardly had he entered when he was met with a message. Mains from Maine had sent to ask Captain Jack to come over to his place at once, "on very important business."

Awhile ago he might have grumbled a little, under his breath, at that message, but May's good news had braced him. Over to Burton Street he went straightway. The lady of the house welcomed him with a smile and words he did not quite understand.

"Mr. Mains says you're to go right up-stairs," she said. "He's got something up there, and he don't want to leave it and lose it."

Up-stairs Jack ran. "Come in!" cried Mains. And Jack opened the door upon a great surprise. There in a corner sat Soapy Smith, most wobegone and disconsolate.

"Well!" blurted Jack.

"Kidnapped it," Mains explained.

"Eh? What?"

"Met it out here on the street an hour ago. Piking along with an air-gun in its hand. Remembered your air-gun idea. Remembered what you've told me about Webb and it and yourselves. Took a chance. Nailed it — this — by the scruff of the neck. Told it I wanted a little talk. Have to come with me on its own feet, or in a basket. Came. Gave away the whole business!"

Mains from Maine shot out his little sentences as though they too came from a gun, but he was enjoying every word.

"He did it, then?" Mains nodded.

"From Webb's carriage. Got in a line with the ball at intermission. When the chance came, lifted

the window an inch, rested the muzzle on the sill and plunked it. Carriage moseyed along. Nobody noticed.

"Better kill him?" Mains asked with great seriousness, but adding an elaborate wink which Soapy did not see.

"Webb'll do that for giving the thing away," Lorimer answered. "I suppose we ought to lick him, but I hate to soil my hands with such a skunk!"

"I'm — I'm sorry!" Soapy snuffled. Two big tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Sorry!" Captain Jack exploded. "Why don't you brace up and stop sneaking for Webb? You don't gain anything by it. You always get left. What fun is there in it?"

"Ain't any! I'm sorry!" Soapy whined again.

Captain Jack took a turn or two up and down the room.

"Better keep the gun and send word to Webb that he can have it when he pays the charges," he said at length.

"How's that? See you tell Webb that, Soapy! Remember, now!"

"Y-yes, sir!" sobbed Soapy.

"Guess that's all, isn't it, Mains?" Captain Jack said. "If you want to take it down-stairs and kick it out, I'll open the windows while you're gone!"

Mains grimly motioned the fellow toward the stairway, and they passed from sight. A moment

later the man from Maine came back, breathing heavily, as though he had put energy into his kick. Neither of them referred to what had passed. Captain Jack had something else on his mind.

"Got a job, yet?" he asked. Mains shook his head.

"I've been thinking, and talking with the fellows," Captain Jack said, slowly. "And we've about concluded that you're the man we want in the new gymnasium — instructor, and man in general charge, you know. Meantime, there are the smaller boys, like my brother Tom, who ought to be started right — they need you the worst way.

"Of course, we don't know yet what this will amount to, but there ought to be a living in it, from the start — and I think you'll find us ready to do the best we can — the square thing. What do you say?"

"I'm with you!" said Mains from Maine. And he put out his hand.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN OFFER FROM THE ENEMY'S CAMP

CAPTAIN JACK walked over to Sennette, the young man at the desk. His voice was quiet and controlled, as usual, but there was an ominous light in his eyes.

"Sooner than raise a riot, we've waited on you thirty-three minutes," he said. "I'll give you just two minutes more to get a message to and from Mr. Webb. If it isn't done by that time, I'll throw you through that window!"

"What, sir! What, sir!" The fellow at the desk started to bluster, but Captain Jack kept his eyes on him, and after a second or two Sennette weakened. He tried to keep up his dignity while he was in the room, but after he got out of sight the sound of his footsteps told that he was travelling fast.

It was an odd situation in which Captain Jack found himself this morning. Harry Lee had come to Millvale on a "charity case" — to ask Attorney Webb's forbearance for a Four Corners man, a tenant of Mr. Lee's, who had involved himself by bad management and was being crowded by people

whom Rel Webb's father represented. Nothing would do for Harry but that Captain Jack should come to the lawyer's office with him; and though Lorimer laughed at the idea, believing his presence would do Lee's cause more harm than good, he agreed to go when he found Harry really wanted him.

In the outer office of the attorney's suite they encountered Dacey Sennette, — generally known as "Daisy," — a young exquisite who was supposed to be studying law. Daisy said Mr. Webb was engaged, and motioned them to seats.

After a few minutes Captain Jack asked that their cards might be taken to Mr. Webb. Daisy answered that the office-boy would be in presently. He himself pretended to be very busy. When he glanced at the visitors, from time to time, he wore an absorbed expression, as though he really didn't see them.

A little while later Captain Jack repeated his suggestion about the cards.

"Pwesently! Pwesently!" lisped Daisy, with a lordly, superior wave of the hand.

But at length it dawned on Captain Jack that this understrapper might be having fun with them — thinking that, because of the relations between Lorimer and the Webbs, it would be perfectly safe. Then, as has been told, Captain Jack read the riot act. And Daisy "made time" and saved his pre-

cious skin. Inside the two minutes they were entering the attorney's private room.

Attorney Webb, always a smooth and plausible person, whether in the presence of friends or enemies, met them in an agreeable way; and when Harry had told his story and asked that the man at Four Corners be given a little more time, Webb promptly replied that he thought it might be arranged.

"Of course if a substantial citizen like your father is interested in Mosher, and feels that consideration would not be thrown away upon him, that puts the situation in a new light," he said. "You may tell Mosher that, mainly in deference to Mr. Lee, I consent to postpone execution for three months."

This was better terms than Harry had expected to get. He was grateful, and said so. But Webb put aside the thanks and changed the subject in a way that would have made a stranger think he was a very generous and modest man.

"Tut, tut!" he said. "Let's talk about yourselves. Are you an athlete, Mr. Lee, like our friend Lorimer, here?"

"Not so good a one," answered Harry, loyally.

Webb smiled on them both. Then he rose and began to walk back and forth with his head bent and his hands behind him, as if planning the course of an argument.

"There is no doubt about Lorimer's superior

gifts," he said at length, speaking slowly and thoughtfully. "There's no question, either, that he is a born leader. Engrossing occupations forbid me to follow the local contests as closely as I could wish to do, yet I do hear of results. I am bound to say that my interest — my pride as a citizen in the victories Millvale wins — is sometimes tempered with regret.

"For one thing, I think my son Orello is qualified to take part in sports from which he seems to be excluded. I may be partial, but — isn't he a promising athlete, Lorimer?" Mr. Webb demanded, suddenly.

"Yes, sir."

"Then why is your influence apparently exerted against him? Why is he excluded?"

"He excludes himself," Captain Jack answered, quietly. "All we ask from each other is fair play, square dealing. From him we don't always get it."

"As illustration?"

"Well, the last thing he did was to hire a toady of his, a fellow we call Soapy Smith, to shoot a hole through a push-ball and break up our game," Jack replied.

"You have proof of this?"

"We have."

"Merely the Smith boy's own statement, I presume. Naturally, if caught at mischief, he would try to lay it off on some one else."

Lorimer smiled. "He used Rel's gun," he an-

swered, with provoking coolness. "We have the gun, by the way — to be returned when the repairs to the push-ball are paid for."

"Hm-m. Hm-m." Mr. Webb cleared his throat and took another tack, probably feeling that he wasn't getting very far on this one.

"I have had some serious conversation with Orello, of late," he said. "He seems to deplore, as I do, the misunderstandings that have kept you and him in opposition. He would like to let bygones be bygones and work with you for the prosperity of the new athletic club and the school association."

Webb stopped a minute. But Lorimer did not speak, only waited for him to go on.

"He has asked me, as evidence of his — our — good faith, to offer a subscription to the gymnasium fund," the attorney resumed. "Had you not happened in, I should have written and asked you to call. I had already made a check to your order." He took a slip of paper from his desk. "I think it should be understood," he added, "that half of this amount is actually Orello's gift. He has borrowed from me, anticipating his allowance, in order to make it."

He looked toward Captain Jack expectantly. But Lorimer still was silent.

"I trust I am warranted in assuming that such a contribution will be received, and in the same spirit in which it is offered?" Webb asked.

"Exactly so. It will be received, and in the same

spirit in which it is offered," Captain Jack answered.

The lawyer seemed a little disappointed. Probably he had expected some gush. It was cold comfort to have his own words given back to him. And yet he admired Lorimer's self-control, and there was respect in his manner, as though he felt he was dealing with an equal, as he handed Jack the slip of paper.

It was a check for one hundred dollars.

"I appreciate this, Mr. Webb," Captain Jack said as he rose to go. "It gives us a flying start on our last thousand. As for Rel and myself — well, I'd rather have friends than enemies, and I'll meet anybody half-way. If Rel wants to bury our little unpleasantness, I'll never revive it, and I'll try to deal with him just as fairly as he will deal with me!"

CHAPTER XXX.

REVOLUTION OR REBELLION — WHICH?

So Rel had thrown up his hands!

If that was actually the case, if the fellows were rid of an enemy who was cunning, unscrupulous, and had plenty of money to carry out his designs — why, that would save a lot of energy that had been wasted in watching and fighting.

Captain Jack hoped it was true. He wanted peace. Yet experience had taught him not to believe everything he was told, and just because Webb, the elder, had said pleasant things and handed over a check, he, Lorimer, did not intend to stuff cotton in his ears and go around with his eyes shut. Rel would have to "make good" before he could be trusted.

At the same time it was only fair to set him right with the fellows, and Captain Jack told the story to his lieutenants and urged them — just as he had done weeks earlier, at the opening of the football season, — to "give the lad a chance."

Tom Bell, big, solid, silent, reliable Tom, said: "That so? Well, we'll see," and went away to think it over.

Oscar Stacy of the Eagle Mills grinned at the tale. "Nothin' from nothin', you can't; two into one don't go," he replied. "Don't believe Webb's got the stuff in him to make him decent. Oh, I won't put anything in his way, but I ain't takin' much stock in him now, you bet!"

Terry McGrady was more hopeful and encouraging.

"Sure, he needs us!" Terry said. "Since Ben Cashman shook his society Rel has no chum — none he can meet without holding his nose!

"Moreover and consequently, Rel's been smoking and drinking more or less, and he has sense enough to know better. He's looking for the easiest way to break off and brace up and get back in condition.

"Take him at his word," Terry advised. "We can use him in hockey, and if he brings out his iceboat this winter, there's races! He's no lovable character, but our fellows and DeArmond's can get along with him, and maybe do him good, and if he tries to put on lugs with the lads from the Mills, and has his head punched, sure that'll do him good, too!"

But Mains from Maine refused to express an opinion. "Stranger," he said. "Your funeral!" Which was probably the most sensible way for a stranger to take it. The situation would have looked a good deal brighter if some of the natives

had imitated his forbearance, or at least waited awhile to see how things would turn out.

Horace White and Sewall Ford wouldn't wait.

It was pretty hard to tell just what ailed the pair. At their best they were inclined to be sulky and surly, but they never developed dangerous symptoms until Mains came to town.

Then they had been smoothed over temporarily by a timely compliment. Now it looked as though stern measures would be called for to bring them in line.

Already they were worrying over the possibility that Rel Webb would crowd one of them out of hockey.

"Fight the fellows eleven months in the year, and then come around in the twelfth month and say you're sorry, and you get the best present on the Christmas tree!" grumbled Horace. "Webb's no better man on skates than I am, but I'll bet you any money that one of us gets put off the team to make room for him!"

"Same way the other will be dropped to let in Mains from Maine, eh?"

"Oh, no, it isn't quite so bad as that. Mains couldn't play in a school team; couldn't play in an amateur team, anyhow, now he's a paid coach, you know.

"Tell you what does make me tired," Horace added, as he recalled another grievance: "That's the idea of his coaching fellows like us! It may

be all right for a jay from down East to blow in here and boss the kids, but I know a few things myself!"

So they fussed and argued, each making himself uncomfortable and keeping the other stirred up, until they were not much use for hockey or anything else. White's red hair nearly turned gray with brooding over imaginary wrongs, and Ford's temper got muscle-bound, as Terry would have said.

When Captain Jack heard of their growls he brought things to a head in very few words.

"Sorry you don't like Mains," he said. "Most of us fellows think he can teach us something. But, since he's one of the kind that won't give much advice unless he's asked, you're in no danger of being compelled to learn anything from him.

"As for hockey," he added, "my idea was to make up two teams, or even three or four, and play them against each other until every man had a try-out, picking the school team from all. You'd have as fair a chance to make the school team as Rel Webb or anybody else.

"If a fair chance isn't good enough for you — if you're looking for a sure thing — I don't see but you'll have to organize a team of your own. I'll tell you right now, if I had anything to do with choosing the school team, I wouldn't promise you or anybody else a place on it until after I'd seen him on the ice!"

"You've seen us on the ice," Ford retorted.

"So I have, in past seasons, and you stand as near the school team, this minute, as any two I know. But when a fellow gets to thinking he ought to have a cinch on any position, he's in a fair way to slight his work — take it too easy. Buck up, boys! Pull yourselves together! It's the team that we've got to think of first!"

That was good advice, but it takes time for advice to soak into a fellow's system. Meanwhile Ford and White did considerable snarling, and some of it got around.

One after another, Tom Bell and Terry McGrady, Ned Harriott and Jeff Bussey caught up with the complaints and advised them to "cut it out." Rel Webb heard of remarks about himself, and made intermission lively one day by offering to fight them, "one at a time or both at once."

Finally, on another day, the day of the first good skating, White came to Ford at intermission, and with a great air of mystery took him off one side.

"Read that!" he whispered.

It was a letter, a ragged half-sheet of paper covered with sprawling pencil-marks.

"Dear Sir," it said. "I am glad to hear, being a true Friend which keeps under cover for good reasons, that you are on to your tirant Boss, Jack Lorimer. Why don't you start your own Clubs and give his lickspittles a razzle-dazzle? You can be backed in so doing and Inclosed will show I

mean Business. Get up a Team and beat him once and his gang will drop him like a Hot patata. So no more at present from

"A Foe to Bosses."

"See that!" White hissed. He showed a ten-dollar bill.

"Who do you suppose sent this?" Ford asked.

"Don't know. Can't imagine. Somebody with a pretty level head — somebody who keeps his eyes open. Lorimer is a boss, no denying that, and if Mains comes in to ride us, and Rel Webb pushes us out, we know who we have to thank for it!"

"Well, what you going to do about it?"

"Sh-h-h!" Lorimer himself was passing at the moment. He noticed and wondered at their secret, mysterious manner.

"Conspiring, fellows?" he asked with a smile.

"Maybe," White answered, grimly.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CHATTY CHAP AT WINTERTON

On that same morning Mains from Maine had started out on his own hook to find some skating.

Lily Lake, which was four miles or so from the business centre of Millvale and not far from the boundary of the adjoining town of Doverdale, was where the fellows carried on most of their winter sports, though, when ice-boat races were on, the contest took in Little River, the stream that drained the lake.

Mains had heard about these places, and he headed for them first, but he meant to go farther. He had the exploring instinct, and there were times when he liked to "flock by himself," and he thought he could get better acquainted with the country if he located his own landmarks.

Lily Lake was pretty nearly deserted when he reached it, except for a few little fellows who had played hookey to try new skates. Mains sped up and down the broad, smooth surface and studied his surroundings — spots where the ice was most liable to weaken, points where the wind had the

greatest sweep, and places to lay out a hockey-rink to the best advantage of players and spectators.

Then he followed Little River along the boundary between Millvale and Doverdale, thinking as he traced its curves and twists that a man would have to do some clever jockeying to get an ice-boat as far as the lake — that is, if the wind was anywhere but east. Yet the natural course for a race would be to start a mile or two up-river and come down to the lake for the finish.

When Mains got through here, it was not far from noon. He took off his skates, walked to the nearest Doverdale grocery and bought and swallowed some raw eggs. Then, with his skates slung over his shoulder, he got " back to the wilds " again.

He had trained himself, at home in Maine, to be a good deal of a woodsman. He could easily spot the lay of the water courses. And he meant to make himself familiar with all this region, since, in the natural course of events, the Millvale fellows would be coming here during the winter to meet other teams.

Mains felt already as though he belonged in Millvale. He heartily admired Captain Jack, and liked most of the other fellows, and he meant to be useful to his new friends. So, as he walked briskly through the outlying half-country regions of Doverdale and on into Winterton, there was little that escaped his eye.

He found good ice in Winterton, a chain of

ponds, none very large, but easy to reach and well sheltered. But, though no trespass signs were up, there was nothing really to show whether these were public playgrounds or whether they had been reserved by some ice company, and he hailed the first man who looked as though he might be able to tell.

This was at the pond farthest from Millvale. The native, a stout young man in a red sweater, stood at the edge of the ice, smoking a clay pipe. He had lifted his hand as if to beckon, as Mains skated up the reach from the pond below; but the man from Maine had turned toward shore even before the signal.

"Going to cut here?" Mains asked. The young fellow laughed.

"Search me!" he said. "Pond belongs to the city, you know. Kids have always skated here, other winters. Seems some kind of a boiling spring has busted out at the bottom of this upper pond since last winter, and some of the sharps down 't City Hall say the ice ain't safe. So, seeing 's election's coming right along, and every good citizen ought to have a job, they've sent me up here to warn skaters away."

"Why not put up some 'Danger' signs?" Mains asked. The Winterton man winked at him hard.

"Danger signs ain't got any vote!" he answered. "Oh, I s'pose they will do it, after next Tuesday.

Guess my little two dollars a day is good till then!" He waved his hand toward the glistening surface.

"Looks fine, though, don't it?" he said. "Like to be out there myself, with a hockey-stick! You belong round here?"

"Maine man," the visitor answered. He felt it in his bones, somehow, that it would be better not to mention Millvale.

"This much of a place for hockey?" he asked, in his turn.

"Oh, there's quite a good many players, and a good many more that think they play. Winterton ain't got any team that comes up to Doverdale's best — Doverdale's the next town, you know — and Millvale, that's twelve miles east of here, knocks the stuffin' out of all of 'em. 'Tain't so much a difference in the players, though, as 'tis in the way they're handled. They've got a captain in Millvale — young feller named Jack Lorimer — say, he's a lallapalooza!"

"So?" Mains looked interested and friendly, and the Winterton man was perfectly willing to take that as his share of the conversation and do the actual talking himself.

"Sure thing! Hockey, football, baseball, rowing, riding, shooting, sparring — say, there ain't a game or a sport that that feller ain't a winner at! He's clean, right down to his bones, too, and his head never swells a sixteenth of an inch! And yet I s'pose there never was a man anywhere round

here that had so many Willy-boy athletes and tin-horn sports tryin' to do him!"

"Yes? How's that?" Mains was removing his skates. The afternoon was getting along, and he thought he would strike back to Millvale by rail or trolley.

"Well, the would-be athletes are down on him because he gets ahead of 'em, and the crooked sports hate him because they can't use him. Some or the other of 'em are schemin' all the time to break him up. Why, I hear they're plannin' to queer his hockey team before it's fairly started!

"Seems there are two kickers, fellers named White and Ford, that have got their dander up about something," the Winterton man prattled on. "Cheap sport named Orne, keeps a poolroom there in Millvale, has heard of it, and he's going to egg 'em on to make a split if they can. I got on to this business sort of second-hand, this morning, but I guess the story's true enough, and if I can run into Captain Jack's way I'm going to give him the tip!"

"Right!" Mains cried. "Glad to meet a square man like you!" He put out his hand, and the Winterton man met it with hearty good-will. Then Mains faced toward the road.

"Car for Doverdale up the bank there?" he asked.

"Sure. You could skate there — and to Millvale and beyond — if you had time and knew the ropes," the native added. "It's roundabout, sort

of, but later in the season there'll be lots of visitin' back and forth that way. I've skated to Millvale many a time."

That was a good thing to know, and Mains put it away in his memory. But of more pressing importance was the news he had heard, and the man from Maine hugged himself to think how useful it would be.

"I'll do a little detective work before I speak to Captain Jack at all," he muttered, "and then I'll put a charge of dynamite under that conspiracy and touch it off!"

But the conspiracy was destined to be broken up by Lorimer himself, and in a very unexpected way.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ONCE MORE THE LORIMER LUCK

If he had not forgotten to bring his skates to school that day, or if he had had time to go home after them, Captain Jack also would have gone skating — but he would not have gone alone.

As it was, he and May Roxton kept the appointment they had originally made, to walk out to the new gymnasium. They told each other that they might have had a livelier time on the ice. Yet Lorimer was very well content; and it is certain that any fellow in Millvale would have been glad to take his place.

"The only objection to walking with you, May," Captain Jack said, as they left the schoolhouse, "is that you expose us both to the danger of pneumonia."

"I do? How, if you please?"

"In cold weather, of all times, we should breathe through the nostrils, in order that the air may be warmed before it reaches the lungs. But you begin to chatter, you see, that forces me to converse, and with our mouths open all the time — well, there'll probably be icicles on my lungs, when I get home!"

"All right, Jack Lorimer! I won't say a word, to pay you for that!"

"Good resolution, May Roxton! Then I won't be tempted to tell you about the plans for our dedication — and if I don't talk, why, I won't have to put on a mustard plaster when —"

"Oh, is everything so far along that you can fix a date for the opening?" May interrupted, eagerly.

"I thought I'd get you going!" Captain Jack retorted. Then they both laughed. It is easy to be merry when one is with "the other one" alone, on a crisp, clear, bracing day.

"If your father's daughter hasn't upset the poor man, as she sometimes does her friends —" Captain Jack began teasingly; but May looked so eager for the news he really wanted to tell, that he could not bear to hold it back.

"Well," he said, seriously, "your father thinks he can get his men out of the building by the 21st. Our equipment is already ordered and ought to be on the ground by that time. Allow two or three days to put things in shape — I don't see any reason why we shouldn't have a little exhibition and dance on Christmas Eve!"

"Oh, that will be lovely! You'll have to make a speech that night, Jack!"

"Not any!" Lorimer said, firmly. "What's the need to talk, anyway?" he added. "The whole thing speaks for itself. Your father has done

wonders, everybody knows. He's rushed that building up as though it was a cardboard house — and yet it's as substantial and complete as though it had taken a year. Then, every man on the job has hustled, Mr. Roxton says; and the way Millvale folks have backed us up — " Jack had to stop short. He couldn't find words for all that was in his heart.

" It's because everybody likes you and has confidence in you, Jack! "

Lorimer smiled. " Everybody? Oh, no! " he replied. " Here's one who doesn't! "

It was Mr. Dacey Sennette, the student in Webb's law office. Faultlessly attired, prinked and perfumed, he tiptoed by, with an impressive bow and a killing smile for May, but not a glance toward her escort.

" Oh, that! " she said, indifferently, as Sennette passed out of earshot. " That doesn't count! And yet it's rather a nuisance, too. Do you know, Jack, I've sometimes thought, lately, that that creature follows me around! "

" Does, does he? Confound his impudence! I can stop that, quick! "

" Well, you mustn't. It wouldn't do for you to bring my name into a quarrel with him or anybody. Of course you realize that.

" But we weren't talking about me," May added. " How are you getting along with Rel and Ben, now? "

"Never better," Captain Jack replied. "No fusses at all. I can't see but that Cashman is going perfectly straight; and it's only a day or two since Webb reformed, you know, so he hasn't had time to get crooked."

"I'm a little afraid of Rel Webb," May murmured. "He's always had his own way, and any time the boys refuse to follow his lead, or I snub him — that would be on your account, he would think — there may be more unpleasantness for everybody, you in particular. Do you imagine he's backing White and Ford?"

"Oh, no. Nobody's backing 'em. Their little crazy spell is all their own. But here!" Jack cried, "we're wasting this fine day borrowing trouble! Cheer up, sister! Look ahead there, and feast your eyes on the new home of the Millvale Athletic Club!"

That was more jest than earnest. The gymnasium was not beautiful. It was just a plain oblong structure that had been built for business, and showed it.

But nothing had been wasted, either of time or money or material. For instance, the grandstand had been saved. The end of the new building backed up against the stand, which could be entered through it.

Under the stand had been dressing-rooms, and this space was utilized for lockers and shower-

baths, so that nearly every foot of floor surface in the gymnasium itself was available for use.

Around the building ran a narrow gallery filled with two rows of seats. There was none on the floor, but standards were set in the columns supporting the gallery, so that, if needed, a space could be railed off to accommodate chairs.

"And then again," said Captain Jack, "when we feel as though we need it more than we need the applause of the public, that's a place to lay down a running track, you see!"

No money had been spent on a fancy ceiling. The big roof-beams and rafters stood out as grim and substantial as a prize-fighter stripped for the ring.

"The thing we really pride ourselves on is the floor," Captain Jack remarked as they walked forward to the centre. "Look at it! Beautiful, eh? Almost a dancing surface, just as it lies; and enough of it — why, there's plenty of room here to play roller polo! And we're going to have basketball, of course. Got to!"

"What are they doing on that scaffolding, up in the roof?" asked May.

"Wiring, or else hanging a chandelier, I guess," Lorimer answered, carelessly. "Come over here, so you can command the whole surface, and let me show you where we planned to put things."

May had never seen him so eager and excited. His eyes shone. His tongue fairly flew. A listener

soon caught his enthusiasm — all the more because he knew just what he was talking about and exactly what he wanted to do.

Roxton's men were working for dear life, for love of Captain Jack; but as they passed the young athlete they slowed their steps, for the pleasure of catching a few of his earnest words. He knew them all, too, and never a man of them missed a nod or a smile.

"Am I tiring you, May?" he said at length, with a little shamefaced laugh. "This all means a good deal to me, you know!" She smiled her interest and encouragement.

Still talking busily, Lorimer led the way back to the centre of the floor. He was telling, now, about a "tremendous bargain" in mats, that Ned Harriott's father had secured for them.

"Why, you know, I shopped like a bargain fiend," he cried. "But finally I had sense enough to go to Mr. Harriott about it, and he got us a better article at one-half —"

"Look out below, there!"

The call had fear and even agony in its tone. Captain Jack lifted his eyes. Away up under the roof, a plank had become detached from the scaffolding and was plunging down upon him and his companion.

May saw it, too. But she was powerless to move. Somehow her accustomed self-possession had deserted her. Her eyes still uplifted, she could

only stand as if rooted to the spot and watch the swift on-coming of the danger that seemed to mean the end of both.

But then all in an instant she felt herself in an iron grasp, whirled round and round and out of peril, standing safe and unharmed a half-dozen feet away. And in the next instant she heard the crash that might have signalled the death of her dearest friend.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

REL WEBB MAKES A FRIENDLY CALL

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3
Goal	Harriott	Reed	Amos
Point	Scott	Janvrin	McGrady
Cover-point	Lorimer	Webb	Cashman
Right centre	Mossin	Collins	York
Right wing	Davis	White	Elverton
Left wing	Chapin	Bell	Bussey
Left centre	Kavanagh	Bacon	Ford

Tom Bell had started for the new gymnasium. Somehow, out of school hours, a fellow who found himself with time on his hands generally seemed to head that way; and Tom had actual business there at present.

But he was not thinking of the gymnasium, nor was his mind on the road he travelled. If it had been a crowded thoroughfare, he would have been run into, or run over, about fifteen times. Even as he walked he studied the list that heads this chapter, and he chuckled at every other step.

"Three well-balanced teams, I reckon!" he muttered, "and Lorimer's is the weakest, if anything. Now let's see whether White or Ford or any other

kicker will say that one man is favoured above any other, in that lay-out!"

Tom had a right to be proud. Each and every line-up was a work of art.

Ordinarily Tom, as president of the High School Athletic Association and chairman of its executive committee, would have appointed Jack Lorimer captain of the hockey team, and Jack would have named the team. But when Tom and his associates undertook to put through this programme, a few days earlier, they had run against a snag. Captain Jack objected.

"Here's a good place to end some cheap talk about bossism and one-man power," he said, "and it's got to be ended!

"You can make up three teams from the fellows who come out for hockey. Don't bunch your best players, but scatter them through the three, so the weaker men will have somebody to play up to — somebody to give them confidence. Have those three teams play a series of matches. Then let the school team, and the captain, too, be chosen by the twenty-one players themselves.

"I'm willing to take responsibility and do the best I can, as you fellows know, but there'll be men on the ice with whom I've been unfriendly, and it'll be better to have them placed by some one who is less likely to be suspected of prejudice. And when it comes to the final choice, I'm not afraid but that the fellows will pick the strongest players."

So it had been agreed. Tom Bell alone had worked out the problem, Captain Jack refusing even to make suggestions. Now Tom was on his way to deliver the goods. He knew that Captain Jack was generally to be found at the gymnasium at this hour. He felt that he himself couldn't wait till morning.

Smiling and expectant, Tom strode up to the door. As he put out his hand to push it open, a workman rushed from the building.

"See him?" he asked wildly. "Is he comin'? The doctor, I mean."

"Doctor? What for?" Two steps took Tom inside.

In a single glance, all the details of the scene were photographed on his mind. Workmen were gathered in an anxious group, longing to help, but helpless. At the centre of the group sat May Roxton, white as death, but quiet and composed, for Jack's sake. His head was in her lap. She was bathing his forehead.

"What's happened?" Tom asked the man who stood nearest. Lorimer must have heard. He opened his eyes and tried to smile.

"Hello, Tom," he murmured. "What's the matter? I — didn't — know — " There were long intervals between the words, and they trailed off into silence.

"Hound up there dropped a board," the workman answered in a fierce undertone. "Mr. Lori-

mer got the young lady out o' the way, but it hit him — kind of a glancin' blow — head and shoulder. Soon's we see him 'tended to, we're goin' to jerk the hide off of that there carpenter!"

"Here's the doctor, now," some one cried. The old physician hurried forward.

"Well, Jack! I don't have you for a patient, very often!" he said. He dropped on one knee, and was busy directly with a swift but searching examination. To May, who watched his face with eyes that were full of dread, he spoke in a moment, softly.

"Cheer up, brave girl," he murmured. "Lorimer's all right!"

"Hold her, Tom," he added quickly; for the relief had overcome the girl, who would not yield to danger or the strain of fear. With a long, shuddering sigh, May fainted.

"Two patients, Mr. Roxton — neither of them a very serious case," the physician cried, with a reassuring smile. Even as he spoke, the contractor had rushed in. Rumours of an accident had reached his city office, as rumours will, and he had driven at break-neck speed.

"Here's for you, May. And this is your dose, Jack." The old physician, who had known them since they were babies and loved them as if they had been his own children, was losing no time and using every means of relief. Captain Jack was the

first to open his eyes again. He stared around him blankly and tried to sit up.

"Get your arm behind him, Tom," the doctor said. "Take May to the door for a breath of fresh air, Mr. Roxton.

"No, Jack's in no danger," he added, answering their unspoken question. "Bruised head and shoulder, two trifling cuts, slight concussion of the brain — that might be a serious matter if he was as old as we are, Roxton, but a day or two of quiet will make the lad as good as new. I'll drive him home and apply an ice-pack, and pretty soon he'll go to sleep and forget all about it."

"Now, we'll 'tend to your case, Jim Peters!" one of the workmen growled. And the others bent black looks on a pale-faced fellow, who, small blame to him, looked as though he would like to run and hide.

"I didn't go to do it — you know I didn't!" Peters muttered.

"Eh? What?" Captain Jack spoke. Seeming to realize that something out of the ordinary was going on, he beckoned to the man who had gripped the unfortunate carpenter by the arm.

"What does that mean?" Lorimer repeated.

"This is the measly cuss that dropped the board, Mr. Lorimer!" the other answered.

"Well — what of it?" said Captain Jack, feebly. "Let it go. You're no friends of mine if you abuse a man on account of an accident."

"Well, we wanted — " The avengers looked at him and at each other, undecidedly.

"Don't worry about it." Captain Jack was speaking to the carpenter now. "I sha'n't lay it up against you.

"Where's May?" he added. "Where's Tom? Guess I'll go home."

"Guess you will," the physician said, briskly. "Guess you'll stay there a day or two."

That was a safe prophecy, because the doctor made it, and he was a man who generally had his way. But by the night of the second day, Friday, Lorimer was very tired of the rest and quiet that had been prescribed.

He was a little lame, rather sore in spots, and there was still a lump on the side of his head. But he felt sure he could "work it off" if he had a chance, and he was determined he would get out for a long run on Saturday, anyhow.

The unaccustomed confinement made him so restless that he sent for several of the fellows, one after the other, and talked more than he had for many a day. But he had one caller he did not send for — Rel Webb, who came in just at dusk, with the air of a man who has important business.

"Sorry to hear you've been getting bunged up, Lorimer," Rel began. "Feeling better?"

"All right, thank you, except for a little stiffness."

"Had something on my mind," Rel went on.

"Thought I'd get it off, at the risk of boring you — though you ought to be glad to get the tip. Remember when I pulled out and started the Outlaws? Well, I hear that two of the fellows are planning just such another fool performance. They say that White and Ford are organizing their own hockey club!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN TIME, AT THE UPPER POND

THE two fellows looked at each other. Rel's gaze was inquiring and expectant. It plainly said: "Well, isn't it up to you to thank me and do something?"

On the other hand, Captain Jack's expression was probably rather distrustful. He could not quite figure out Rel's motive in bringing this tale. But the visitor's next words supplied a reason and sounded genuine enough.

"White and Ford are good men on the ice," he said. "Very likely the school team will need them. It seems a pity, doesn't it, that they should run the risk of weakening it and making fools of themselves, when a word in season — or a good swift kick," he added with a grin — "might bring them to their senses?"

Captain Jack shook his head.

"I'm afraid they'll have to mix their own medicine," he said. "If it leaves a bad taste in their mouths — well, that's all in a lifetime! Of course, if I get the right kind of an opening, I'll talk to them, and thanks to you for mentioning it. But

from what I know of their case already, it looks pretty hopeless. Apparently they want a definite agreement that they shall be on the school team — and at this stage of the game nobody can promise that."

"Oh, I don't know," Rel answered, with a suggestion of a sneer, "couldn't you do it if you tried real hard?"

"No," Captain Jack said, quietly. "I've put the matter out of my hands." He outlined the scheme that was to be carried out.

Rel listened eagerly.

"Well, that's fair," he commented. "Did Bell put me down? What position?"

"You and Cashman and myself are the three cover-points. Bell would probably give you the whole list if you asked him — though I suppose he'd rather present it to the association, first, at Monday night's meeting."

"When do you think we could start that series?"

"Tuesday afternoon," said Lorimer, with a smile. "Although, on second thoughts, I suppose it would be better to wait and make sure we haven't forgotten how to skate since last winter!

"If the weather favours so we can run those practice games right through," he added, "each team playing twice with each of the others — six games in all — I don't see why we shouldn't pick the school team at the meeting two weeks from Monday night."

Rel nodded his agreement. "Meantime," he added, "I'm going to take a whack at White and Ford myself. I can speak from experience!

"By the way," he went on, with some embarrassment, "I'm obliged to you fellows for returning my air-gun. I was a chump to put Smith up to use it. Of course, I don't forget that I owe you for repairs to the pushball."

"Oh, that's all right, I guess," Lorimer replied. "Your father's generous check ought to cover that."

"Well, I'll go home and shine up my skates. Good luck to your sore spots!"

"Thanks! I think I'll get on the ice to-morrow morning and see if I can't work some of the soreness out of 'em."

Indeed, that was already arranged. Jeff Bussey was booked for companion. They would make an early start, he and Captain Jack planned, and, before the Saturday crowd cut up the ice, Jeff, as a stranger to Millvale, should be shown the best skating that the region had to offer.

"Don't ye bother to turn over for a mornin' nap, 'cause I'm goin' to beat the roosters!" had been Jeff's parting word. He was not quite so early as that, but the sun had not yet risen when Captain Jack heard his signal whistle and let himself quietly out of the house. How good it was to be on his feet again, after a day or two indoors!

A fellow who had never known the real joy of

living, to be sound and strong, keen-eyed, deep-chested, and hard of muscle, would have retreated with a shiver before that nipping morning air. But Captain Jack and Jeff enjoyed every whiff of it, and found themselves braced by the contact.

"Well, somebody's ahead of us!" said Jeff, disappointedly, as they came in sight of Lily Lake. "Didn't s'pose there was anybody outside of our crowd that had sense enough to get up early to have fun!

"Say, it's Mains from Maine!" he cried at the second glance. "Why-ee, Mains!" he yelled. "What you pryin' the sun up for?"

"Come aboard!" was Mains's greeting. "Lend you some of this ice! Only borrowed it myself, you know!" He pointed at fresh skate-strokes reaching up the lake.

"Somebody here ahead of you, eh?" laughed Captain Jack.

"That means that more of our fellers have turned loose this mornin'," Bussey declared. "Bet you the hole from a doughnut, Mains, that that feller's one of Cap'n Jack's crowd!"

Mains nodded and smiled.

"Race you to the head of the lake," he challenged. And they were off.

Mains the skater was a deceptive proposition, like Mains the boxer. One would not have believed that a short, rather stout man could get over the ice as he did. His reach was almost equal to Bussey's,

and his long glide was the very model of a speed stroke.

Bussey caught a twig and was thrown out of his stride, but he quickly recovered himself and was only a few feet behind his companions when they finished neck and neck.

"Beat ye next time!" he said.

"What's the matter with making Winterton?" Captain Jack suggested. "It's only about twelve miles — rather an interesting course, at that!"

"Lead the way!"

"I'll go ye!"

Recalling his experience of a few days previous, Mains keenly watched the road. He recognized the point where he had left the ice — a turn, almost a double, which he had concluded to be only a blind path. Yet, passing this, and another spot where the way led across a flooded meadow, the route was not so very complicated, and he knew he could retrace it.

"T'other feller's gone up there, too," said Bussey, with his eye on the ice. The fresh tracks still led.

Twelve miles is no day's journey for fellows who like to skate and know how. Very soon, as it seemed to them, the three were crossing the chain of ponds at Winterton.

Captain Jack was in advance. Mains had dropped behind a little to listen to one of Bussey's stories. It did not occur to the man from Maine that they

were drawing near the upper pond, the one called dangerous, until all at once he heard a faint call for help and the answering yell of Captain Jack.

"Keep up! We're coming!" roared Lorimer.

"Jehosaphat!" gasped Jeff Bussey. "That's one of our fellers! That's Horace White!"

No one was in sight. They three must depend on themselves. And already Captain Jack was circling cautiously around the hole in the ice, to learn how near they could approach.

"Off with your sweaters, boys!" he cried, all at once. His own was off, almost before the words were uttered. "We'll tie 'em together and try to drag him out. If the ice gives under him, he'll be so much nearer the shore, anyway.

"Hang on, Horace! We'll land you!" Deftly and swiftly Captain Jack was knotting the sweaters.

"Be ready, Horace!" Ominous sounds were all around. The ice seemed to be breaking up. Only by keeping in motion could Captain Jack sustain himself. Had he stood still a moment the ice must have settled under his weight.

"Now!" At the word he swept in a long curve toward the endangered skater and then away. Would he himself be engulfed at that instant when he dropped one end of their odd rope within White's grasp? It almost seemed so. No! He was beyond the zone of greatest peril. White had clutched the sweater. Captain Jack wheeled.

"Tail on, boys!" he cried. It sounded like a shout of victory.

"Hang on, Horace!" Three pairs of powerful arms applied a steady pressure.

"Up you come!" No, the ice was breaking in front of him. He lifted a despairing face.

"Hold your grip, Horace! Don't lose your nerve! We'll get you!"

Once more that steady, irresistible pressure. Slowly, slowly, White's body rose above the ice. Upward and forward, almost out of the water — then once again the ice gave warning. Almost their hearts stood still. But never an inch did they give — nor did that brittle surface yield. Little by little they drew their comrade to firm ice and safety.

"Hustle him — nearest house and into bed," Mains commanded.

It was late in the afternoon when White opened his eyes. Captain Jack and Mains from Maine were sitting at the far side of the room. They hurried forward.

"Well, old fellow, how do you feel?" Lorimer asked.

"All right," White answered, weakly. "Better get home, I guess."

"Jeff's gone on for three or four overcoats, and such like," Captain Jack replied. "When he comes, I think we can fix you up so you'll stand it." White closed his eyes and was still for a long moment.

"You fellows saved my life!" he said at length. Tears slowly forced themselves from under his eyelids.

"Oh, well — you'd do as much for us. Shut up, now! Lie still and take it easy!" But White would not be content until he had freed his mind.

"Say, Jack, I was going back on you and the rest of the boys! Say, Jack, I was! But I'm sorry!" he muttered feverishly.

"Oh, that's all right, too!" Captain Jack answered. "Think we'd let you go? You're one of us, Horace! Shut up, now, and go to sleep again, if you want to play hockey with us!"

"Sure I want to play hockey with you!" White replied, with a kind of drowsy energy.

Then he went to sleep; and, as future chapters will tell, he did play hockey with the fellows, many a time — and a good game at that.

Nor did he ever learn who it was that had offered to be his backer. Captain Jack and Mains agreed, when they talked it over, that it would humiliate him needlessly to let him know that a scamp like Orne had had an approving eye on him. So Mains never disclosed what he had learned at Winterton.

But after awhile White and Ford told their part of the story, in confidence, to Captain Jack, and turned the anonymous ten dollar bill into the gymnasium fund. That would not have pleased Orne a bit. But it did the gymnasium fund just ten dollars' worth of good.

CHAPTER XXXV.

TRIED BY THE TEST OF DEFEAT

"I'm proud of 'em!" said Captain Jack. "Find me another crowd that would give Rel and Ben any such square deal!"

"They're white!" Mains from Maine agreed. "If Webb and Cashman don't go straight —" He wagged his head as if to say, then nothing would make them do it.

The practice matches had begun. The second and third teams were on the ice to-day, and Rel Webb was captaining the one, with Ben Cashman as captain of the other!

Yet this happened naturally enough. When Tom Bell, as president of the High School Athletic Association, named the three hockey teams, he had put down Captain Jack and Rel and Ben as cover-points. That was the position where all three were most at home.

Of course, there was never any doubt that Jack Lorimer would be the captain of his team. The fellows who played with him would not hear of anything else. But the cover-point ought to be the captain, for his position puts him in touch with both

the defence and the forward players, and when the fellows in the other two teams had sized up the situation, they seemed to decide almost unanimously and all at once to do the generous thing.

Sewall Ford blinked a little over the idea of "being bossed by Ben Cashman," but when he took his grievance to Horace White, that reformed kicker gave him no encouragement.

"I'm done with scrapping about nothing," White said. "I think Tom Bell would be a better captain than Rel Webb, and Terry McGrady would be better than Ben Cashman, but if Tom and Terry want to make things easy for two fellows who have got licked and have thrown up their hands — why, I'm out to help instead of hinder! All we've got to do is to play our own positions best we know how!" So Sewall held his tongue and got back into the ranks.

Thus the series of matches was making a fine start, with the friends of all the teams on hand, and with Principal Blaisdell of the high school acting as referee. Blaisdell was a Canadian by birth; like most of our neighbours at the northward, he thought hockey the greatest game that ever was, and in the skating season he came as near to being one of the boys as a dignified schoolmaster could.

"Play!" he called. The puck was faced between the sticks of Bacon and Ford. Bacon captured it and sent it to Bell. Then Bell and White

and Bacon started with it up the ice, Collins following slightly in the rear.

It was well he was there, for a fumble by White placed the three off-side, and only Collins's prompt recovery of the puck put them once more in play.

Again, it was Collins who nursed the puck along the ice until the four forwards were almost up to Ben Cashman, the opposing cover-point. This was good tactics, for the cover-point could not know until the last minute whether the rubber would be passed to right wing or left wing, or even to the other centre, and so could not tell from which quarter he must meet attack.

But here Ford saw a chance for a grandstand play. Sweeping down the ice from the neighbourhood of his own goal, he body-checked Collins and at the same instant made a drive at the puck.

"Chump!" muttered Mains from Maine in Captain Jack's ear. And yet Ford's attempt had succeeded, and the puck was now in motion toward the opposite goal, with Bussey and York behind it.

Lorimer laughed. "You mean that a forward has no business to body-check — takes too much out of him?" he asked.

"Exactly," Mains nodded. "Defence can afford to body-check, sometimes. Forward ought to save his strength for rushes."

"His side is backing him well, though — backing the play. See, Elverton's got the puck, now! Good lift, that was! Ah! good stop Janvrin made,

too. Jeff Bussey's going to pass it to Elverton again, bet you a dollar! Always for his team, Jeff is — no trying to gain glory for Jeff Bussey!

"No," Captain Jack added. "It's a drive between their legs! Dangerous play, that, but — Well, well! It went through Reed, didn't it?"

Cashman's team had scored the first goal. It seemed that Webb's goal-keeper might have stopped the puck, had he been a trifle more alert. And yet it had passed a little below the knee, and, as all players know, that is the hardest kind of shot to ward off.

Reed, the goal-keeper, was a quiet, modest, conscientious fellow, who did his best every time, and when luck goes against such a player he deserves to be treated tenderly. But Rel Webb didn't like the idea of Cashman's men scoring first.

"D'you get buttered all over before you came into this game?" he snarled at Reed, as the teams lined up again. Reed flushed. Though he made no answer to the slur, he would not forget it.

And, at the same time, Cashman was calling down Ford — who, it is true, deserved reproof, but reproof a little differently worded:

"See here, Ford," Ben said, "when there's any body-checking to be done, McGrady or I will do it, understand? There's no more steam in your boiler than you'll need to use in rushes!" So Ford, who had been rather sour in the first place, felt sourer still.

After the second face the most noticeable thing was a combination play by White and Bell, and an equally clever check by McGrady. Following Terry's brilliant repulse, York and Elverton carried the puck down toward Webb's goal. And here Cashman's enthusiasm swept him from his moorings. He joined the offence, playing far down the ice away from his position.

It seemed at the moment a safe chance to take; but in hockey positions shift with every second. Bell and White got the puck again, and this time Collins reënforced. The new combination lured McGrady to one side, and then, following a swift and dexterous pass, sent the puck through Amos. That gave Webb's side a point which it might not have had if Cashman had been in his own place and attending to business.

"Humph!" growled Mains from Maine. "All got a heap to learn!"

So Captain Jack thought, though he kept his opinions to himself. He took as desperate chances, at times, when he knew he could rely on his support. But he had noticed that there were fellows in both teams who lost sight of the first principles of hockey; who, for instance, took one hand to their sticks, struck with the tip of the blade, and passed the puck in line with their partner's skates instead of feeding it to his stick.

"Pretty hard prospect for me, considering there are three new men on my team, where these teams

only have one or two apiece," Captain Jack said to himself. "Here goes to call another morning practice, and make sure that all my fellows know how to put on their skates!"

As the half came to an end with the score a tie, 1 to 1, Captain Jack set out to circulate among the spectators and gather up his men. Harriott and Mossin were found together, and they readily agreed to meet next morning at seven o'clock.

"Don't be backward about throwing it into me, if you see me doing things wrong," Mossin said, frankly. "I don't pretend to be a star player, and I want all the tips you can give me."

That was the right spirit, and if the other two subs took it that way, Captain Jack thought it would be easy to train a winning team. But those others, Scott and Davis, were not in sight at present, and Captain Jack had to be content with sending them word by two of his "standbys" whom he could reach, Chapin and Kavanagh.

"By the way, Will," he asked, as they watched the rather tame beginning of the second half, "where are all the girls to-day?" Chapin smiled.

"I'll give you all I've got," he said. "I asked Nora McGrady and Rose Ahearn if they were coming over, and they said no, the girls were all busy preparing for the Christmas vacation. They were very mysterious about it. Guess they're hatching a scheme — something about the gymnasium.

"Good pass of Bussey's, that," Chapin added.

"But what's the matter with Ford? He's playing like a bale of hay!"

Captain Jack let part of that go by. He suspected why Ford was so stiff and lifeless, — that he had strained his body, and somebody else had tried his temper; but to talk about it might be to make a bad matter worse.

"York's a good man," he said; "and there are others of our new men who will make strong, reliable players. Those goal-keepers are both putting up a fine game, considering they're in the place where it's easiest for a novice to get rattled."

"What say if I repeat that to 'em when I get a chance?"

"Go ahead. The time when a fellow needs good words is when he's a green player — and he never gets too many!"

"Fine lift Rel Webb made then!" Chapin cried. "Don't you think Cashman's playing too open a formation?"

But that question answered itself, for almost as he spoke, and all in an instant, Ford sent the puck to Elverton and Elverton returned it to Bussey, and, with a long drive from left centre, Jeff put it through the goal.

"Two to one for Cashman's team," Chapin muttered. "But say, Lorimer, these fellows are slow! Eight minutes to play, and I'll bet you nobody scores!"

"The teams are pretty well matched," Captain Jack answered. "It's anybody's game yet."

"Dunno about that, my lad! Guess Ben's got it!" It was Seth Lanard who spoke, and Lorimer, turning quickly, saw that the old man was smiling all over his face.

"Say," he added in a lower tone, "if it was you and Ben playin' agin each other I wouldn't give a durn which licked; but I do want to see him beat that Webb cuss! Kind o' seems to me you fellers make a mistake in having him round at all. I wouldn't trust a Webb no further'n I could sling a bull by the tail!"

"Oh, I guess he'll turn out all right, Mr. Lanard," Captain Jack said, cheerfully.

"Wait and see how he takes a lickin' — that's the test of a man!" Lanard replied. "And — say — you're goin' to have a chance, by gum! Say, didn't your Bussey, the long-legged countryman, score a goal then? Yeah! Hooray! Hooray for our side!" The old man finished with a roar that made every one turn smilingly to look.

Every one but Rel Webb; for the game had ended — 3 to 1 in Cashman's favour — almost at the moment Lanard let out that bellow of rejoicing; and in the same moment, with a black frown on his face, Rel Webb turned on his heel and skated down the lake.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SOMETHING IN THE MENAGERIE LINE

"MOUSE! Oh, there's a mouse!" screamed Clare Bell; and that dignified senior, who was a good deal of an athlete herself, and who, Ned Harriott often declared, was "game for anything," jumped straight into the air, stood on her seat, and gathered her skirts tightly around her ankles.

"Where? Where is it? Oh, where is it?"

Twenty or thirty other girls dropped their work, leaped to their feet, and tried desperately to make themselves as small as possible. Few of them were as agile as Clare, but they all did their best. Several of them could shriek harder, and proved it. Two or three climbed to the tops of their desks, wrapped their feet inside their dresses, and sat shivering. One girl promptly fainted and fell out in the aisle.

"Young ladies, I am amazed —" The room teacher, Miss Palmer, began in a tremulous voice that she tried to make brave. But just then the mouse started toward the platform.

"O-o-ow!" she squealed. "Take it away! O-o-ow! Ring for the janitor!" She threw a

vase of flowers at the unwelcome visitor, and when she saw that the missile fell short she hopped up in her chair, bunched her skirts about her, and made ready to climb on the table.

Terry McGrady, grinning broadly, dropped a book on the little animal, stunned it, and then took it up and flung it out of the window. The girls and Miss Palmer climbed down. Miss Palmer took a drink of water, and changed the subject.

This all happened in a senior class-room. The odd thing was that, during the same session, something very like it happened in two other class-rooms, a middle and a junior.

There were girls in all these rooms, girls who were not fond of mice, and the racket some of the younger ones made was terrific. Principal Blaisdell heard it and came up the stairs at the rate of three steps to the jump, thinking, perhaps, that a teacher had gone mad and started to murder a pupil.

He looked relieved when he found that mice had caused the panic, but he was angry, too.

"Make an investigation," he said to the three teachers in whose rooms the mice had appeared. The investigation began right away.

But nothing came of it. Of course the girls were not questioned, but the fellows were, and every one denied that the mice were his property, and declared that he knew nothing about them. It looked as though it was "up to" O'Brien, the janitor.

"Set some traps, O'Brien," Principal Blaisdell ordered. The janitor went back to the basement muttering angrily.

"Sure I'd like to set one that would catch the divil that was after bringin' in the mice!" he growled. "'Twould be worth a day's wages to take a kick at him!"

But he set the traps, and though they were all empty on Tuesday morning, the appearance of another mouse suggested that O'Brien was right and that they would better fix up a boy trap.

The mouse showed up this time in one of the first-year class-rooms — in a desk, at that. It was a girl named Ruth Driver, a very sedate little girl, who braided her hair in one long pigtail, and wore spectacles, who, when she lifted the lid of her desk that Tuesday morning, found a small pasteboard box.

It was the kind of box in which baseballs are packed, and of course Ruth knew that she had not left it there. She shook it, and found there was something inside. Probably her chum, Belle Mead, was giving her a surprise. Ruth looked over at Belle and smiled knowingly. Then she put the box down on her desk and pried open the flap.

"Help! Help!" Ruth's smile froze stiff, and her braid stuck out straight when the mouse hopped out of the box. The animal scurried across her desk and dropped into the aisle, and Ruth collapsed in the opposite aisle.

Tom Lorimer cornered the mouse and killed it. Perhaps that young brother of Jack's made a mistake in putting himself forward, for he had been in mischief more than once, and he chuckled as though he was having a good deal of fun out of this. Anyway, he fell under suspicion.

"Lorimer," the room teacher said, sharply, "did you have anything to do with fetching that — that creature to the building or with putting it in Miss Driver's desk?"

"No, ma'am," Tom answered

"Humph!" She had to take his word, for she had never known a Lorimer to lie. But she continued to keep an eye on him, and if Tom failed to attend strictly to business that day it was not her fault.

So here had been four rooms upset, four teachers threatened with nervous prostration, and a hundred girls compelled to give exhibitions of ground and lofty tumbling. Principal Blaisdell was angry about it, and he made the mice the theme of his talk in the assembly hall on Wednesday morning.

"Practical jokes of this sort are childish and unmanly," he said. "These must stop. It is the interest of all of us to maintain discipline. It is especially the duty of us who call ourselves gentlemen to guard these ladies, our schoolmates and instructors, from pain or annoyance.

"I shall expect the help of all of you in detecting the author of these silly pranks," the principal

added. "That young man, whoever he may be, is in an unenviable position already. He might in a measure atone for his folly by frankly admitting his fault and making public apology."

The principal waited a moment; but nobody seemed to have anything to confess.

"On the other hand," Mr. Blaisdell concluded, "should he make any further display of his own bad breeding, the consequences would be extremely serious. Return to your classes."

The scholars went back to their rooms wondering who was "the author of these silly pranks," and eyeing each other suspiciously. There were fellows in every room who might have done the mouse trick once, as a thoughtless joke, but it was hard to believe they would keep on doing it until it turned stale.

Slowly the school settled down to the morning's work. Then one of the girls in young Tom Lorimer's room went over to the big waste-basket that stood on the teacher's platform, near the radiator. She bent over it to throw in some scraps. The next moment she jumped as though she had been shot.

"Oo-o-o!" she gasped. "Snakes!"

"What's that? What's that? Nonsense!" It was the room teacher, Miss Burbank. As she spoke she advanced and looked into the basket. She drew back shuddering.

"Ring for the janitor!" she commanded. Then

she faced the room. "Who has thrown anything into the basket this morning?" she asked.

Three or four girls and as many fellows raised their hands. Tom Lorimer was one.

"Has any member of any other class been seen near the basket?" Miss Burbank went on. A girl raised her hand.

"Soapy — I mean Archibald — Archibald Smith — I think he's a junior — threw something in, before school," she volunteered. Miss Burbank called a monitor forward.

"My compliments to Miss Shaw, and ask her if she will kindly send Archibald Smith here," she said.

As the monitor departed on her errand, the janitor appeared. Miss Burbank pointed at the basket and said a word or two, and with a grin he plunged his arm into it and lifted out a harmless little green snake. The reptile should naturally have gone to sleep for the winter before this time, and the heat from the radiator had not thawed him out enough to make him very lively.

"Scut, ye divil!" the janitor muttered, as he dropped the snake out of the nearest window. Tom Lorimer laughed. The teacher scowled at him ominously. But now Soapy Smith was on the ground, and she turned to the new arrival.

"Your name is Smith?" she said. "You were seen to throw something in that basket, before school. Tell me about it."

"Yessum," answered Soapy, glibly and innocently. "I dropped some paper in the corridor out there, on my way up-stairs, and a monitor saw me, and he told me to pick it up and put it in the basket, and I did."

"You put nothing else in?"

"No'm."

One after another Miss Burbank catechized her own boys. None of them knew anything about the snake.

Somehow she seemed extra suspicious of Tom Lorimer. She tried to stare him out of countenance, and she asked him more questions than she put to any of the others. "Humph!" she said at last. Then Tom lost his temper.

"Don't you dare to tell me I lie!" he cried. "I think as much of my word as you do of yours!"

"Take your seat," was all Miss Burbank answered. She had sent for Miss Shaw, Soapy's room teacher, and now the two women put their heads together for awhile. Finally Miss Burbank came to the front of her platform.

"It seems clear," she began, "that the responsibility for this outrage, and probably for those that preceded it, rests upon one of five pupils. From what I know of boys, it appears likely that, though only one may actually have done the deed, the other four have guilty knowledge of it and are abetting it by silence. Under the circumstances, Miss Shaw agrees with me that equal punishment should be

meted out to all, and that all should share it until one has the manliness to confess and bear it alone."

She paused impressively. Every eye was fixed upon her, and every ear intent on what she might proclaim.

"Smith, Bates, McCobb, Gregory, Lorimer," she said, slowly and clearly, "go home! Until further notice you are suspended from this school!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHEN CAPTAIN JACK GOT WHIPPED

On this Wednesday when Tom Lorimer was sent home in disgrace Captain Jack was having troubles of his own, and, strange as it may seem, May Roxton caused one of them.

"Going to the game this afternoon?" she repeated when, at intermission, Jack reminded her that his team was scheduled to play Cashman's. "Indeed I'm not, Jack Lorimer! I'm too busy getting ready for the Christmas vacation!"

Not another word of explanation would she give. In fact she didn't seem to want to talk to him at all. She waved a good-bye and joined Clare Bell, throwing a roguish smile at him over her shoulder. But in spite of that smile Jack felt much mystified and not a little hurt.

The second set-back came when Principal Blaisdell gave notice that he would be unable to referee the match.

There was another jolt awaiting the young captain when he got home, a letter saying that some of the apparatus ordered for the new gymnasium could

not be delivered at the time expected. That might overturn their plans for the Christmas Eve exhibition!

And the worst blow met him at Lily Lake, when Phil Kavanagh showed up looking very "dumpish" and woebegone.

"I don't know what ails me, Jack," Phil said, "but I'm a total wreck! Never was sick in my life, but seems as though I'm going to be. I'll go in and do the best I can, if you say so; but perhaps you'd better play a sub."

Captain Jack glanced around the group of spectators — not a large one, for the day was cold, with a raw wind.

"Size 'em up for yourself, Phil," he answered. "It's a hard show for a sub, isn't it? Nobody out there who knows the A B C of hockey.

"Where does your trouble catch you, Phil?" he added. "Any pain? Chilly? Feel weak?"

"I'm kind o' wobbly," Kavanagh confessed. "And I'm thick-headed — stupid."

"Oh, I'll risk that part of it! If you think you're strong enough, better try it for the half, and if the exercise doesn't brace you, maybe somebody'll come along that I can put in your place at intermission."

So the match began, with Mains from Maine for referee; and it did not take many minutes to show that Phil was seriously out of condition.

Ordinarily he was aggressive, but not rash. He

was a finished skater, master of a clean, sure stroke, and had the priceless faculty of thinking in a hurry — could put through an individual play or take his part in a combination and do the right thing, almost as if by instinct.

To-day he was only the shadow of his usual form. He carried the attack right up to Cashman's goal, at the start, but the quick and resourceful play that might have scored, seemed out of his power.

Granted, that Cashman's goal was well defended. Lorimer's men could not break through. At length, Captain Jack playing well up toward the middle of the rink, Mossin slid the puck down to him — a play that often coaxes out the defence and brings about a rearrangement of positions.

The trick served, this time; but when Lorimer drove the puck back to Kavanagh, for a quick play for goal, he fumbled it, and the advantage was lost.

Finally the puck got away from Lorimer's team, and Cashman's players began to advance it toward their opponents' goal.

Lorimer was everywhere. More than one drive that seemed bound to score was blocked by his swift skates and his ready stick.

But whatever he might do with the puck, he could not keep four men engaged. York had stolen down behind the goal. Ford got the puck at the side of the rink and sent it down to him.

Then Ford dashed over to the centre. The puck

came back to him. Scott moved out to meet a line drive. But, quicker than thought, Ford sent the puck to Bussey, and with a magnificent long lift Jeff put the rubber between Scott and Lorimer and across the goal-line, just missing Harriott's outstretched hand.

"One for them," Captain Jack told Scott. "It was a good play, too, and I ought to have known that Jeff was the fellow to take just such a chance."

But the next face seemed a signal for wild work on both sides. Cashman's fellows appeared to have some kind of angle drive or lift in their heads. The forwards hung around the sides of the rink, and the puck kept going out of bounds. Time was wasted, and nothing had been done when Mains called the intermission.

"You see, I'm no good to-day, Jack," Phil Kavanagh said, mournfully. "Tom's over there, now. Better get him into the game, and I'll drop out before I queer your chance."

"Just as you say, Phil," Captain Jack answered. "I don't want to crowd you if you think you're not in form. Take a hot drink and go to bed, and I'll see you in the morning." So Kavanagh turned over his stick and his good wishes to Tom, and young Lorimer came on the ice looking as proud as a poodle with a pink ribbon.

"Don't be afraid to mix it up, Tommy, even if the other fellows are bigger," Captain Jack said. "A crack on the shin won't kill you, and in a clean

game like this you're not likely to catch anything worse."

"Oh, you just watch me!" bragged Tom.

The elder brother did that, and he was well pleased with the way Tom carried himself. He was quick, vigilant, and showed very good judgment.

But now Chapin was the only "seasoned" forward Lorimer had, and Cashman had four stars, while his defence, McGrady and himself, was almost impregnable. To be sure, Cashman's goalkeeper, Amos, was a new man; but there was everything to give him confidence.

As Lorimer sized up the opening plays in the second half, he decided that if his fellows scored they would do wonders; if they kept the puck away from their own goal, it would be about as much as he could expect.

Playing dangerously wide of his position, away up toward the middle of the rink, Captain Jack advanced and retreated, twisted and wheeled and dodged and turned, every faculty alert to seize the slightest opening. Several times his fellows passed the puck to him, and twice he uncovered his own defence and joined a combination play for goal, but McGrady or Cashman blocked the play each time.

And yet it was amazing how his greenhorns held Cashman's fellows! Mossin and Davis, not to speak of his brother, were "coming men," coming

fast, and before this series ended they would make opponents sit up and take notice.

In twenty minutes of hard fighting neither side managed to score. To be sure, the game was Cashmans, 1 to 0, but, considering all the handicaps, Captain Jack was well satisfied. He skated up to Cashman and held out his hand.

"Congratulations, Ben!" he said. "This makes two out of six for you."

"Oh, I guess we are the people, all right!" Cashman responded, boastfully. "If we get left at hockey, it'll be your uncle's treat!" Captain Jack laughed.

"I'll take peanuts for mine," he said, good-naturedly, as he turned toward the bank. Somewhat to his surprise, Rel Webb joined him on the way.

"Say, that windbag makes me sick!" Rel growled. "I'd given ten dollars to see you beat him!"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Captain Jack. "This is no life-and-death business. The thing is not so much to win as to do your best. Both teams did that, and there's no kick coming."

"Wish I could take it as easy as you do," Rel answered, half-enviously. "I was so hot, after that last game, that I had to cut and run. Not that I minded the whipping so much, but the fool plays some of my fellows made — well, if I'd stayed a minute longer I should have soaked 'em for it!"

"Get on to your job, Rel!" Captain Jack smiled, but his tone was serious enough. "A new man, for instance Reed, your goal-keeper, needs more considerate treatment than you'd expect for yourself. Give him all the praise you can. When you have to do the other thing — well, give it to him on the quiet as a friendly tip, instead of making it a public roast. It's just as easy to make a new man steady, reliable, and loyal, as it is to make him reckless and turn him into a sorehead with a knife up his sleeve!"

And with those words of wisdom in his ears, Rel Webb went away to think it over.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SETH LANARD'S HAPPY AFTERNOON

"THE first thing to do" — it was Tom Bell who spoke, as the fellows came together for their usual two-minute chat before school on Thursday morning — "the first thing to do is to call meetings of the other three classes and decide whether we're going to back up the kids."

"Wrong, Tom!" said Jack Lorimer. "The first thing to do is to take care of Phil Kavanagh's paper route!

"It looks as though Phil was in for a spell of typhoid," he explained, in answer to their mystified glances. "That's what Doctor Brady thought last night. If it comes to that, his folks will need the five dollars a week he's been turning in, and I don't see why we can't hold the route for him. It's morning and evening, you know. I'll take the morning delivery for the first week — "

"And the evening for me!" Terry McGrady interrupted.

"Say, where do the rest of us come in?" Ned Harriott asked.

"Oh, there'll be room enough for everybody. A fever's no joke, you know. Phil's mother and sister will want a good deal of help, one way and another — in taking care of Phil at night, for instance. We're young and tough, and to lose a little sleep wouldn't hurt us."

"Phil's a white man, and I'm out to give him a lift any old way you'll show me!" Matt Janvrin said; and everybody seemed to feel the same way. The truth was, they were all "white men," and Captain Jack was proud of his chums, as he had been many a time before.

"Well, then, Ned, you live nearest the Kavanaghs, say you talk with Phil's mother and then lay out a schedule of night watches, and let us know when our turns come?" Lorimer suggested. "There are a dozen or twenty other fellows in the two upper classes who would be glad to come in on any such arrangement, and there's Jeff Bussey — wouldn't want to leave out Jeff!

"Now, Mr. President of the senior class," he added, with a laughing nod toward Tom Bell, "go on with your continued story!"

"Well, you know what the first-year pupils have done," Bell said. "They've voted that the penalty imposed on the five who were sent home was unwarranted and unreasonable, and have asked the other three classes to join in making representations to the principal.

"I'm pretty clear that we'd be justified in taking

up the matter," he went on. "But if class meetings are to be held, I think they'd better be called on petition of ten members, as the by-laws provide. And I think we'd better not go off half-cocked — better not approach Mr. Blaisdell before next Monday, say. That'll show self-control on our part, and it'll give the truth a chance to come out — as it generally does in a case of this kind, if you wait long enough."

Tom's suggestions were generally adopted, and they were in this instance. But after two days the case seemed as blind as ever; and now it was Saturday, with the matter still unsettled, and everybody feeling the same way.

To-day Lorimer's fellows were going to meet Rel Webb's team. Once again Mains from Maine would referee, and again Tom Lorimer would play Kavanagh's position. Tom had made good on the previous Wednesday, and, indeed, there was no one else to put in his place. The formation of three teams had swept the school pretty dry of hockey material.

Even with the handicap of light and inexperienced players, Captain Jack thought he had a chance to win. He wanted to win! December never gives us a finer day than this one was, and there was a crowd on the lake. He wanted to justify the confidence of his friends. He wanted to give his untried players a start toward leadership and success.

But he was calm and cool and free from outward sign of anxiety when the teams took their positions. And when at the face Tom swept the puck from Bacon and dashed with it up the ice he looked the least excited of all spectators.

Tom and the other forwards had had their instructions in two words: "Take chances!" It wouldn't do to try to play a waiting game against Bell and Collins and White and Bacon.

So Lorimer's men were all over the ice from the first, venturing long drives, rushing in where the clash of the sticks was like the rattle of a tempest and making their plays with a vim that kept the watchers on tiptoe.

"Bully! Bully boys!" yelled Terry McGrady on the outside. "Sure," he added, "who could teach them better than Captain Jack how to be in two places at the same time!"

Yet there was more than one try for goal that failed disastrously, for Rel Webb was on his mettle, and Matt Janvrin, behind him, had eyes in the back of his head, and Reed, the goal-keeper, was out to redeem his reputation or make one.

But after ten minutes of hard, swift work that accomplished nothing, Chapin and Tom Lorimer coaxed Rel Webb out to one side, and got Janvrin looking their way, and then a lightning pass to Mossin and a sharp, clean drive by him turned the trick.

Old Seth Lanard jumped up and down and

pounded Ben Cashman on the back until Ben's eyes watered.

"That's the stuff!" Lanard cried. "That's the game beats football all to pieces! I'd give twenty-five thousand dollars to be forty years younger, so I could play that game! I would, by gum!"

But one goal does not ensure victory. In a moment the game was on again, and old Seth was too busy watching to find time to talk.

Still Lorimer's forwards kept up their aggressive tactics. Something was doing every second, and "Take chances!" was still the watchword. When Webb and Janvrin were not blocking long drives they were anxiously looking out for lifts. And it was a lift from Captain Jack's own stick, at the end of a sudden, unexpected foray into the field of battle, that scored the second goal.

Next instant he was back in his position. He, too, had taken a chance, but he would not long leave Harriott and Scott without reënforcement.

Yet the conflict did not move his way again. It was still raging beyond him when intermission came. Tom Lorimer skated over, mopping his forehead.

"Guess you'll have it hotter, next half, Jack," he said. "Guess we're just about tuckered out!"

"That's all right, Tommy," the elder brother answered. "I've been wondering if I was ever going to get into the game — you fellows have been doing so nobly."

And it turned out as Tom had predicted and as Captain Jack had foreseen. His new men lacked staying power. That would come, with time and practice; but now they could not keep up their hottest pace — while Rel Webb's veteran forwards were getting warmed up and ready to play their best game.

Will Chapin's energy had not failed, and he was never long out of reach of the rubber, but the combination plays he tried slipped up because his partners could not put speed and strength into them. On Lorimer and Scott and Harriott most of the burden rested.

Theirs was as dogged a defence as their forwards' had been a dashing attack. How they checked straight shots, and foiled trick plays, and broke up combinations, would be a long story in the telling. It seemed as though luck was with them, and Webb's team would be whitewashed.

But at the very end of the half, Scott and Harriott relaxed their watchfulness or had their attention lured away, for just one fatal instant, and Tom Bell sent the puck across the line.

Lorimer's team had won, in spite of that — 2 to 1 — and Seth Lanard was the happiest man in Millvale.

"Haw, haw, haw!" he roared. "What's the matter with Captain Jack? Hey? Ain't nothin' the matter with him — and that's the answer! If I was

a drinkin' man I'd go and celebrate, I would, by gum!"

Partly from friendliness for Jack, partly out of dislike for Rel Webb, the old man rejoiced. And yet he could not have found much fault with the way Rel took the result.

"Won't tell you I'm glad you won, Lorimer," he said. "I'm not. But it was a good game, and I'd rather lose to you than to — some others," he added, with a glance in Ben Cashman's direction.

"It was a good game, Rel," Captain Jack answered. "I'm proud of winning, and you needn't be ashamed of losing."

"Going over gymnasium way?" Rel added.

"Yes, but I'm going farther — home," was the reply. "I've agreed to sit up with Phil Kavanagh to-night, and I think I'll try and get a little nap between this and seven o'clock. Anyway, there's nothing new to-day in gymnasium affairs, you know."

But there Captain Jack made a mistake.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AT FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

On the choicest of cards, in the daintiest of envelopes, this was what Captain Jack found awaiting him when he got home from the game:

MR. JOHN A. LORIMER:

THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY IS
RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED
AT A

CHRISTMAS TREE

COMPLIMENTARY TO THE MILLVALE
ATHLETIC CLUB

TO BE UNVEILED IN THEIR GYMNASIUM ON

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON
DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH
AT THREE O'CLOCK

SANTA CLAUS
PER LADIES' COMMITTEE

For a few minutes he studied this, wonderingly; then he flung on his cap and made his way to May

Roxton's. Dimpling and with eyes aglow with fun and laughter, May met him, and he showed the invitation.

"How about it, sister?" he asked.

"What makes you think I know?"

"Well, you ought to know. You're in all the mischief that's going."

"Oh, you mean thing! Well, we did get it up — we girls. It's an awful cheek, of course, to break in like that and take the gymnasium away from the people it belongs to, but the Christmas tree won't cut into your evening exhibition and so we thought you wouldn't mind — considering it's us."

Jack went a little closer and looked her in the eyes.

"So this is the reason why you've been dodging me all the week," he said. May smiled and nodded.

"I was so afraid I'd forget and tell you about it," she answered. "And that's why we sent out those invitations so far ahead — because we feared somebody might get to talking and spoil the surprise. I'm not going to tell you a single thing about that Christmas tree, now."

"All right, sister! No time to waste on you, then! I'll run home and try for a nap before I go over to Phil Kavanagh's."

"Give my love to Phil," May said, with a sparkle of mischief in her eye. But Captain Jack met her promptly.

"Won't do it," he answered. "Want it my-

self!" And as May retreated, laughing and blushing, he came away.

That night at Kavanagh's was long and slow and uneventful. Phil drowsed most of the time, and when at intervals he started up for a minute, there was nothing to be said to him and little to be done for him. Captain Jack did not dare to nap, he would not strain his eyes to read by the dim light, so he had leisure to do some heavy thinking.

Of the new athletic club, and its gymnasium, and the school teams; of May and the Christmas surprise; of Rel Webb and Ben Cashman, enemies who now seemed anxious to be friends, and of Terry and Tom and Phil and others, friends always.

But somehow his mind would come back to the trouble at the school, the trouble that had grown out of a fool's tricks and an angry teacher's hasty action. The really wonderful thing was that the fellow who brought in the mice and the snake had not betrayed himself. Generally the one who put through any such "joke" was so proud of it that he had to talk.

That aside, Captain Jack couldn't quite see how the difficulty was going to end. He was mulling it over when at five o'clock Mrs. Kavanagh came down-stairs. And when he had made his report and let himself out into the raw December dawn, the thing was still in his thoughts.

"Prize for the first correct solution!" he muttered with a joyless laugh. But even then it was

on the way to him, at the hands of the last person whom he would have expected to see.

As the most noiseless footgear he could think of, he had worn that night a pair of moccasins, a souvenir of his camping and hunting trips, and now, as he made his way, without the sound of footfall, through the silent and deserted streets, he thought, what a start it would give an early traveller to meet him at a turning. Some one was coming now. He and they were approaching a corner from opposite sides.

Captain Jack puckered his lips to whistle by way of warning. Then he yielded to a roguish prompting. He would just walk along and meet the fellow at that sharp turn — and see him jump! On he went; to the corner; around it; plump up against Lem Saunders!

"Why, hello, Lem!" he cried. But Lem was speechless for the moment. The shock had been too much for him.

Lorimer looked him over. He was thinner and older than he had been a few weeks before. Either he had been ill, or he had known hard work and short commons. Lorimer forgot that the fellow had been his enemy, and had done him an injury, and spoke the natural prompting of a generous heart:

"'Fraid you've been under the weather, haven't you, Lem?" he said. Saunders gasped and stared.

"Why, what do you care, if you want to put me in the penitentiary?" he snarled.

Lorimer laughed.

"Rats!" he said. "You served me a dirty trick, but you got the worst of it, so I wiped the account off the books. Haven't thought of you these six weeks!"

"Didn't you tell Soapy Smith, only last Wednesday, that you'd land me in jail if I ever struck town?" Lem persisted.

"Rats again!" Lorimer answered. "Did you ever know me to make talk with Soapy about anything? That's a lie on the face of it!"

Saunders seemed at last convinced. He drew a long breath of mingled surprise and relief.

"Well, the measly little — cuss!" he exclaimed. "Here I've been hiding at home like a rat in a hole since Wednesday morning, and got up before daylight to take the first train — I'm working in Boston, you know — just because that runt told me you were hot to have me arrested! You were the only one I was afraid of — I squared that fellow Orne — and I suppose that giving me a scare about it was Soapy's idea of a joke!"

Lorimer smiled as he listened; but Saunders did not seem to find it so amusing.

"Tell you what, Lorimer," he cried, all at once. "Turn about is fair — I'm going to give that galoot away! Having a fuss at the school, aren't you? Well, Soapy's at the bottom of it. He did

the mouse tricks. And that snake — he got him at Marston's the florist's, in Doverdale. He told me so!"

"Will you stick to all that, Lem?"

"Bet your life I will! Here!" Saunders scribbled something on a slip of paper and handed it over. "That's my address in Boston. If Soapy doesn't knuckle when you put it to him, you write or wire me, and I'll take a day off and help you wind him up!"

Captain Jack put the paper carefully away.

"Much obliged to you, Lem," he said. "I don't believe there'll be any need of that. If it'll be any comfort to you, though, I'll tell you right now that Soapy is in for trouble — big trouble!"

CHAPTER XL.

WHEN SOAPY SMITH BECAME AN ATHLETE

"Up with him, now! One, two, three! All together!"

The ropes drew taut. Soapy Smith's feet flew out from under him, and he sat down hard. His heels went up, his head went down, scraping along the floor. Then, struggling and crying and cursing, Soapy rose into the air, feet first.

Soapy had been having a busy day.

Except to the committee of class presidents, Captain Jack had not said much about the news he received from Lem Saunders; but he had mentioned it to his brother Tom, and Tom hurried it along to Bates, McCobb and Gregory, the other first-year boys who had been suspended on Soapy's account. They four promptly appointed themselves a special committee to see that Soapy went to school on Monday morning.

Gregory, a fellow a good deal like Terry McGrady, who could talk the birds out of the trees, saw Soapy first, and persuaded him that the suspended pupils had all been sent for. After they

were out of sight of Soapy's house the other three appeared, and they four took turns in kicking him all the way to school.

That was the funniest little procession that ever passed through Millvale streets — funny, that is, for all but Soapy, who was being lifted off the ground at every few steps. Nor did anybody feel like interfering with the show, for each of the other fellows was smaller than Soapy, and when a by-stander showed signs of interest, they told what the victim had done.

Well, Soapy got to school, where by this time the committee of class presidents was closeted with the principal, and after awhile he was pushed into the hall, where all the pupils were assembled. The first-year fellows were reinstated, with something very like an apology, but Soapy got severely roasted, and had his suspension continued indefinitely.

Worse came later, when a crowd of the younger and wilder athletes encountered him after school and carried him off to the new gymnasium.

Ford and Bacon, Amos and Collins, Reed and Davis, were in the party. They flung two ropes over a beam and drew him up by the heels, as has been told. Swinging head down, a trapeze mysteriously drifted within his reach, and he clutched it with a desperate grip. But then the trapeze was pulled up, and Soapy was left spread-eagled, six or eight feet from the floor.

It would have been a simple thing for an athlete to change hands, raise himself and turn and rest comfortably enough, with his elbows over the bars, but Soapy hung back down, with all his weight dependent on that desperate hand-grip, till Collins yelled at him.

"Shift your hands, you fool, over the bar!" Collins cried. "One hand at a time! Now the other! Now kick out and get your legs straight!" With many groans, Soapy managed to twist and turn so that he hung more easily, looking down on the floor.

"That's the stuff!" said Collins. "You'll do very well there while we're talking to you.

"When we go," he added to his companions in a voice that was meant for Soapy to hear, "we'll haul him up to the roof and make the ropes fast!"

"Oh, please! Oh, mercy! Oh, for heaven's sake, don't!" Soapy whined. "I never did anything to you!"

"You've wronged us all," White said, solemnly. "You've given the school a bad name. The mouse business was a regular kid trick. We might have overlooked that, if you'd done it once and then quit, but you kept it up till it got stale. Then you tried to dodge the consequences at other fellows' expense. You were childish and stupid and sneaking, all in one, and Millvale High can't stand for any such combination!"

"Not in a junior, anyway," Davis added. Davis had felt about two inches taller since he had entered the junior class, and he was bound to maintain its dignity.

"We've got to punish Soapy so he'll remember how the school feels about it," said Ford. "What'll do him most good?"

"Make him take a bath," Davis suggested. "That'll do his room-mates good, too." The fellows laughed. In spite of his nickname, Smith was none too fond of soap and water.

"Tell you what — we'll take turns going out with him every day for a run before breakfast. If he doesn't come to time any day, we'll fetch him over here and put him through a course of sprouts!"

From his elevated perch above their heads Soapy groaned dismally.

"Please let me down!" he pleaded. "I'm all numb!"

"Swim out, Soapy!" Collins answered, cheerfully. "Do the overhand stroke!"

"Better be contented where you are," added Davis. "The next thing we do to you might be a good deal worse."

The fellows were standing round grinning at him and enjoying the situation hugely. They did not realize that Soapy was in a tight place.

"Heavy standing round" was about the only exercise he ever took. He was eternally stuffing pas-

try and candy, smoking cigarettes and drinking soda, and where the other fellows were hard as nails, Soapy was flabby as dough. They could have gone to sleep, almost, in his position, but he was having hard work to hang on.

"I'm going to fall!" he groaned. He was pretty near collapse, and if he had lost his hold on the trapeze and swung off by the legs he might have suffered serious injury. The fellows who had strung him up didn't think of that.

But Jack Lorimer did. Entering the gymnasium at that moment, he instantly saw the danger and went forward.

"You're running a risk — making a mistake. Better let him down, fellows," Lorimer said. Then Soapy either got a glimpse of the newcomer or recognized his voice.

"Oh, Lorimer, make them stop!" he cried, weakly. "I'm going to fall!"

"Hang on a minute longer," Captain Jack replied. He turned to the others.

"Let him down," he repeated.

He did not raise his voice at all, but the tone showed that he meant what he said. Without a word they slacked the ropes. Slowly the chap who had been spread-eagled sank toward the floor. He did not rise from it, though Amos ran and unbound him. Some minutes passed before he managed to sit up and stare about him in a dazed way.

"Don't see why you should take that skunk's part, Lorimer!" White grumbled.

"Don't you? Well, I'll take any fellow's part when I find half a dozen against him," Captain Jack said, quietly. "I believe in man-to-man fights, when fights are necessary, but I haven't any use for hazing. Neither would you fellows do anything like this if you stopped to think it over. It's not a gentleman's game!"

"Oh, well, we ain't handling a gentleman!" was Ford's impatient rejoinder.

"The question isn't what he is, but what you are!" That covered the ground, and Captain Jack did not want to "rub it in," for he knew the fellows had acted from sheer thoughtlessness, and would be rather ashamed of it, by and by. He turned to Soapy.

"Better get along home, Soapy, if you're feeling all right," he said. "We're none of us very fond of you at present, you know."

White and trembling, Soapy staggered to his feet. He could hardly speak, but he had been so upset that neither could he maintain the smooth and cautious manner which had gained him his nickname.

"I hate you all!" he cried. "I hate Millvale High! I hate this whole rotten town! When Rel Webb or Ben Cashman gets ready to make trouble for you, I'll help him and hurt you every way I can!"

CHAPTER XLI.

REL, BEN, AND THE PEACEMAKER

WELL, that was all right. As Captain Jack saw the situation, there was a week or two of peace ahead, at the worst. Three more games of hockey were to be played, and neither Rel nor Ben would risk a fuss that might spoil his chance of making the school team.

Meanwhile the unpleasantness in Millvale High was not quite over; for, led by Tom Lorimer, the first-year boys who had been suspended objected to going back to their former desks. "Miss Burbank just the same as called us liars," young Lorimer argued.

But for one long day and part of another, Tom and the others remained in her room, they and their teacher scowling at each other whenever eyes chanced to meet. Then the fellows were moved to another section. Tom Lorimer came out of school and threw up his cap.

"It's a good sign, Jack!" he cried. "This is the afternoon we play with Cashman's team, and I'm going to score a goal, to celebrate!"

"Hope you will, Tommy," Captain Jack answered.

There was another who seemed to hope so, too, and this was no less a person than Rel Webb. From the moment the game began, he was like a cat on a hot stove. Tom Bell watched him, and wondered.

Rel was too nervous to stay on the bank. He had put on his skates and gone out on the lake, and he followed the match so closely that Mains, the referee, twice warned him off. Nobody yelled louder than he did when Lorimer or one of his men made a winning play, and nobody looked glummer when Cashman's side gained an advantage.

Tom Bell couldn't quite account for this fierce partiality. It might be Rel resented the fact that Ben Cashman had gone back on him, got ahead of him in throwing up the sponge and promising to play fair. But it didn't seem quite natural to see their old enemy so enthusiastic for Lorimer, and it made Tom suspicious.

Whatever Rel's reason and intentions, he found plenty to yell about. Captain Jack's fellows were putting up a hard, swift game; there was something doing every minute; and things seemed to be coming their way.

Lorimer's side forced the fighting, from the beginning. His forwards had been getting in a good deal of practice, considering the short time they had

been together, and it showed in dash and spirit as well as tactics.

And Tom Lorimer did score a goal, almost at the start. With Cashman playing a little too far from home, and McGrady close to the goal and in line with its keeper, Tom flashed past Ben and seized the one right moment for a drive through Terry's legs. The dangerous experiment succeeded. With Terry in front of him the goal-keeper did not see the play until it was too late to stop the puck.

A little while later, still in the neighbourhood of Cashman's goal, Davis tripped over his own stick. He made a fall that brought down two or three and scattered other players over a wide surface, and several of them made the mistake of following his motions instead of watching the puck.

Mossin didn't lose it, though, and the first thing anybody knew he had lifted it safely across the goal line. Then Rel Webb roared with glee.

But the trick waked Cashman up, and he and his fellows put on a spurt. York, Elverton, Bussey, and Ford, his forwards, were not the men to be fooled twice, and they were bound to have their revenge.

Captain Jack was the man they had to watch, and as they bullied their way down toward his end of the rink, keeping the puck with them by sheer superiority of weight and reach, he had his eye on them, too. He body-checked Ford and Bussey at

critical moments and Davis ably seconded by breaking up a combination that looked dangerous.

Then Elverton tried a long lift, which Harriott checked with a beautiful one-hand stop. But at the next attempt, just a moment before the half ended, York scored by a drive from the right.

"Well, it's two to one in favour of Lorimer, for a starter!" Rel Webb said to Nora McGrady.

That sister of Terry's was a pretty girl at the worst of times. To-day, with her blue eyes shining from health and exercise and her cheeks flushed with the delicate pink of excitement, some people might have thought she was better worth watching than the game. Rel wasn't blind, either.

"By Jove, Nora, you look out of sight!" he added, earnestly.

Nora tossed her head and moved away a little. She was at the age when a girl has given up climbing trees and jumping fences and playing tag with the boys, but hasn't quite decided whether she has any other use for boys, or not. Besides, Rel was eighteen, two years older than she was. And then again, she was bound to be a little suspicious of a fellow who had always fought her brother's crowd, and whom she had been accustomed to think of as an enemy.

If Tom Lorimer had said that — Well, perhaps Nora wouldn't have run from it. But Rel was not bashful, and he moved along, too.

"Good thing for Cashman, that he's got your

brother," he said. "If it wasn't for Terry's point playing, Lorimer's side would score whenever they felt like it."

This was not quite true, but it pleased Nora, who thought her brother was "the greatest ever." She favoured Rel with a friendlier glance, and he stayed with her while the intermission lasted, doing his best to be entertaining, that is, saying things he thought she would like to hear.

To be sure he deserted her when the match began again, but that didn't hurt her feelings. Judging him by herself, she would have been ready to admit that a good lively game of hockey was more important than all the girls — or boys — that ever uttered compliments.

But that second half was not so interesting as the first. Something seemed to have settled down on the whole crowd, to take away the "snap." Drives went wide, passes were fumbled, and there was more than one time-wasting mix-up that a clever dodge might have averted.

Still Captain Jack realized that it might have been worse. His forwards were showing more endurance than they had manifested in the second half of the preceding match. They were quite as energetic and alert as Cashman's seasoned players.

Not that that was saying much! The thing was, to wake them up. Captain Jack gave Scott the signal to be on his guard, and then he inched up toward the centre.

A moment after, it fell to Terry McGrady's lot to lift the puck from Cashman's goal. As it sailed down toward him, Captain Jack came up to meet it. Almost before it touched the ice his stick met it with one of the straight, clean blows that calls for both strength and skill. Lined out like a bullet from a gun, and seeming to move as swiftly, the rubber flew over the goal.

It was the longest line drive that had ever "got by" on this rink, and it stirred Lorimer's followers to heroic exertions. They set their teeth and buckled down to the game with redoubled energy.

Chapin scored, luck backing a clever play, and that pleased everybody, who knew what a solid, reliable fellow Will was — the type of man who plays for his team every time.

And lastly Tom Lorimer thought he had a sure thing for a goal — but Terry McGrady just grinned and slid out a foot, not troubling to use his stick, and the puck stayed right there.

However, Cashman's fellows couldn't rest with the score as it stood, and in the six minutes still to play they fairly tore up the ice.

Jeff Bussey finally scored, on a brilliant combination play that took in Elverton and Cashman, and he was making a desperate try for another point when Mains blew his whistle.

Score, 4 to 2 in favour of Lorimer's team.

Ben Cashman, looking rather blue, skated up toward the bank. Rel Webb put himself in his way.

"Well, Ben, I see you got yours!" Rel said, with a malicious laugh. Cashman made no reply.

"Let's see, where did you qualify as a hockey expert, anyway?" Rel went on, sneeringly. "Was it at Los Angeles? Or did you learn to play hockey that winter you spent in Cuba? Your game is very Spanish — emphatically dago!"

Cashman stopped and confronted the other.

"See here, Webb, do you want me to break your face?" he demanded.

"Sure! I'll be pleased all to pieces to have you try!" was Rel's prompt answer.

The two fellows bristled up to each other, both willing and ready to fight. Probably neither of them noticed that they had come to a stand just in front of Nora McGrady. But Nora was not slow about reminding them.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, you two!" she said, indignantly. "Everybody knows that these games are between high school teams, so public quarrels just reflect on the school! You stop your fussing, now, right off!"

Webb and Cashman looked at her and at each other, and hardly knew what to say.

"Who began it?" Nora demanded. "Rel, were you slurring Ben about losing the match?"

"Well, I —" Rel stopped; but Nora took him up.

"Then, if you've been nagging, you tell him

you're sorry, and you two shake hands!" Nora ordered.

It would have taken a brave man to say no, outright, to the beautiful girl who faced them in such queenly fashion. But the fellows hesitated. And then Nora played her trump, though she did not exactly plan it. She was hurt and disappointed, and tears started to her eyes.

"Oh, I say, Nora, don't cry!" Rel said, hastily. "'Tisn't worth it! See here, Ben, I take it back, whatever it was!"

And Ben had stammered out some kind of remonstrance, and his hand was out already. Nora smiled on them, impartially.

"There, that looks better!" she said. "We girls are so tired of these horrid squabbles, you can't think! Fight for the school, if you have to, but don't fight each other, now, will you?"

And under the spell of those bright eyes, still bediamonded with tears she had almost shed on their account, Rel and Ben promised they wouldn't.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE THIRD MAN'S TURN TO WIN

"TELL me about that Christmas tree, sister!" said Captain Jack. "I'm losing sleep and flesh, wondering what it's going to be like!"

It was Saturday afternoon, and he and May were on their way to the fifth game in the hockey series, the second match between the Webb and Cashman teams. May had not followed the series very closely, but to-day she yielded to Lorimer's appeal to "Be a patriot — come out and holler! Millvale High expects every girl to do her duty!" And because she had done him a favour, as she pretended, she was teasing him, to make up.

Now she threw him an arch, reproachful glance.

"Curious!" she retorted. "It's terrible to see how inquisitive boys are! They can't keep a secret, either! Oh, we simply don't dare to trust our plans to anybody!

"I'll tell you one thing, though," she added. "We must have the gymnasium to ourselves, all the forenoon, that day before Christmas. If any fellow comes near it on any pretext we'll hang him to the tree!"

Captain Jack threw back his head and laughed — the ringing laugh that tells of sound lungs and a clear conscience.

"Bless you, May, nobody bothers anybody, in Millvale, any more!" he cried. "Rel Webb and Ben Cashman are with the crowd, Lem Saunders is out of town, Soapy Smith is suppressed, Orne, the poolroom man, is in jail — and the coast is clear all round!"

May set her lips and shook her head.

"There'll be trouble from Rel Webb, yet!" she predicted. "Ben Cashman may go back on you, too. And there's another. Sennette, that student in old Webb's office — "

"He been bothering you?"

"N-no, not so very much, but he doesn't like you, and they may all get together, in the Christmas vacation, and fix up some surprise for you that won't be pleasant!"

Captain Jack stood still a moment, and, with his head on one side, gazed at his companion, soberly.

"You're not so pretty, when you're looking worried — when your mouth is puckered and you're carrying a wrinkle between your eyebrows!" he said. "Please put on the face you wear when you think of me!

"And here we are," he added. "Now you get out in front there and give three cheers for Webb and three more for Cashman, and then you'll make a good beginning!"

But, so far from that, May protested that she wouldn't have them think she had any interest in their old game, and she soon found standing-room where she was not conspicuous.

She had to admit, however, that the match was worth watching. In fact both teams were out for blood, determined to score and score a plenty.

If anything, the advantage was with Cashman's team. Though Tom Bell was the strongest forward on the ice, Cashman's four forwards averaged better than Webb's four; and though Janvrin was a first-rate man, McGrady was probably capable of more sustained and brilliant play.

But luck seemed to be with Webb at the beginning, and his fellows scored three points, through Bell and Collins, before the other side had seriously threatened their goal.

Then fortune turned in the other direction, and Cashman's team scored twice. The half closed with the sides in that position, either liable to win, and both pretty confident.

Flushed with the joy of battle, Rel Webb came up to Captain Jack.

"If I had Ned Harriott for goal-keeper, I'd lick that fellow Cashman out of his boots!" he said.

The amusing thing was that, as he went away, Ben Cashman came forward.

"If I had Harriott at my goal, I'd feel dead sure of winning!" he muttered.

This was a double-barrelled compliment that

would please not only Ned, but Clare Bell, Ned's nearest friend, and Captain Jack looked around to find her. A jolly group of girls was gathered about old Seth Lanard. Clare did not seem to be there, but Captain Jack walked toward the party, and Mr. Lanard beckoned him on.

"Here I be, wastin' another afternoon to watch a passel of fellers thumpin' each other's shins!" the old man roared. "Terrible old gump, ain't I? But, say, how d'ye think it's comin' out?"

"Hard to tell, at present," Captain Jack answered. "If Ben should win this match it might make him the winner of the series, so you're justified in hoping he will."

"You've beat two games and he's beat two — 's that it?"

"That's it."

"Then," the old man said, shrewdly, "I kind o' hope that pesky critter Webb'll get this one. It'll make things more interesting."

"You're getting to be a pretty good sportsman, Mr. Lanard!" laughed Captain Jack. "I wouldn't be sorry, myself, to see Rel win this time."

Cashman and his fellows did not feel that way, of course; yet Ben was mainly responsible for the result of the second half. So anxious was he, that he got rattled and went wild.

There are times in hockey when a fellow must mix in rather against his will; but there are other times when he must keep off and let the other fel-

lows do the trick. Ben was interfering all the time, and he spoiled more than one promising play.

Jeff Bussey scored a point by luck, but Tom Bell had already made one for Webb's team, so that was no great help. About the best that Cashman's men could do was to keep the score where it stood, and they had to take long chances and work like Trojans to do that.

Rel Webb held on to himself very well, and the thing that pleased Captain Jack most was that, when the match ended and Cashman's fellows, tired and dispirited, came off the ice, he made no attempt to "rub it in." Avoiding the defeated players, he came up to Captain Jack.

"Glad I didn't get left out in the cold," Rel said, pleasantly, but putting on no airs. "Let's see, that last game, your team and mine, comes Tuesday afternoon, doesn't it?" Captain Jack nodded.

"Girls have their Christmas tree Wednesday afternoon, so we put it ahead a day," he answered.

"If I win, the three teams will be tied?" Captain Jack smiled assent.

"I'm going to beat you if I can, Lorimer!" Rel added. Captain Jack laughed.

"Bully for you!" he said. "I wouldn't give a hoot to play against a fellow who didn't feel just that way!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

AT THE EDGE OF A SNOW-STORM

CHRISTMAS falling on Thursday, the holiday vacation of ten days began Tuesday noon. And on that afternoon pretty nearly every pupil of Millvale High, together with the principal and many of the teachers, might have been found at Lily Lake.

To-day came the sixth and last of the scheduled games in the hockey series. If Lorimer captured it, he would be the winner of three games and of the series. If Webb's fellows won, the three teams would be tied.

Either event might happen. Though Captain Jack had "the habit of victory," most of his victories had been gained with teams he had chosen himself and drilled in his tactics; and now he was handling young players who had hardly had time to catch "the Lorimer spirit" or even get used to each other.

Still he was not worrying. Though defeated in the first game they had played, that with Cashman's team, the next two games had shown that his colts were developing fast, striking a winning gait, and

probably he looked forward to this afternoon with as much confidence as Rel Webb did.

"Sure we might volunteer to go ahead with snow-shovels," Terry McGrady said to Jeff Bussey, as the two teams moved out upon the ice; for the sky was overcast and already a few flakes were sifting down.

"Goin' to be a hot game — they cal'late to melt it before it strikes," Jeff answered, dryly.

It began that way, with Mossin and Davis and young Lorimer rushing the puck up the ice; old reliable Will Chapin following a little behind to make sure that a slip or fumble did not put his fellows offside; and it went on that way, with Webb lifting the puck so fiercely that it went almost across the lake.

Then, when it was brought back and faced again, Bacon drove it down toward Lorimer's goal, and there was some warm, swift work in defence to keep Webb's mighty men from scoring.

And they did score first, before the match had gone very far, Webb sending the rubber up to White and White to Bell, and an accurate drive getting by both Scott and Harriott.

There matters hung. Webb's fellows used their most "smashing" tactics and Captain Jack's men worked their trickiest combinations, but Captain Jack and Rel Webb were equally impregnable. Seldom anything went past them, and when it did it stopped short of the goal.

It seemed like working for nothing, and young Lorimer took it hard. He was rather disheartened when a pet play failed, and he got mad when Bacon, striking at the puck, landed on his ankle. Such symptoms a player shows when he begins to go to pieces. They did not escape Captain Jack's notice.

"Steady, Tom! Take it easy!" he said, as his brother dashed past.

The elder Lorimer saw nothing to be nervous about. If they didn't lead in the first half, they might in the second; and when the first ended, with the score 1 to 0 against his side, he was as calm and cheerful as if he had already won the game.

"Don't you lose your head!" he told Tom, when they all got together at intermission. "We're going to win, but when a player gets rattled, remember, his team has to win in spite of him.

"Keep things moving," he added to the group. And as he looked around at the darkening day: "We'll take turns digging each other out!"

It would be hockey under difficulties. The snow was coming a little faster now, considerable had fallen, and short, swift passes were practically out of the question. The rubber must be lifted or driven hard, and that necessity would forbid a good many effective combinations, while at the same time — since skating, too, would be more difficult — all a player's strength and dexterity would be demanded.

With his team in the lead, Rel Webb didn't want to postpone the game.

"The weather handicaps us as much as it does you," he said, when Lorimer offered to abide by his decision. "I think we'd better put her through."

Captain Jack didn't mind. He was pretty good at shovelling snow himself.

So the second half began, with Tom Lorimer steadied for business and the rest of the fellows fit as fiddles, and before the other team had settled down to work, or realized the first rush meant anything serious, Chapin had lifted the puck across the line and evened the score.

Rel Webb scowled and started to say something warm to Reed and Janvrin; then checked himself, remembering that that would be poor policy. There was time to win, yet.

Whatever he might think of the defence, it was certain that Rel had no cause to complain of his forwards. For six or eight minutes after that goal was scored, Captain Jack was about the busiest fellow in Millvale, and that was their fault.

Then they let up a little, or, rather, they ceased to bunch in his neighbourhood and went back to more open play. With the ice as it was, it was almost useless to attempt combinations, and Webb's fellows evidently meant to try some long shots.

Captain Jack approved those tactics. He thought of using them himself. Besides, this drawing off

enabled him to move freely. Now, if an opening came, he meant to take a chance.

But it seemed a long time coming. His fellows and Webb's ploughed around, kicking up snow and poking at the rubber — which was about as lifeless as so much lead — and not getting anywhere. And yet Lorimer felt very hopeful, for the wind was with him, and the snow was beginning to sift into the eyes of Webb's defence.

With one eye on the play, Captain Jack inspected his foot-gear. Speed skating or trick skating or anything like elaborate dodging would be impossible, but he had kept the snow from balling around his skates, and on this surface he could come as near to racing as anybody could. As for what he could do with the stick —

All in a moment Captain Jack gathered himself for a mighty effort and dashed up the ice. He saw his opening. The wings were making it, at the risk of putting themselves offside. It was a time to hurry!

Scattering snow like a locomotive, Captain Jack went up the rink. Leaning a little forward, one eye on his men and one on the goal, all thought of opposition forgotten in his headlong rush, he reached the rubber, and at the very instant of passing put all his strength into one tremendous drive.

Past Webb and Janvrin and Reed the puck whizzed like a thunderbolt. Webb was wide of it. Janvrin's stick missed it by a hair's breadth. Reed,

confused by a gust of snow, pawed wildly after it, and had to let it go by.

"Bully boy!" yelled Terry McGrady from the bank.

Then began another period of middle-rink activity, with the puck never far from the forwards. Webb's fellows played desperately, but somehow even their lifts fell short, and to drive the puck became momentarily more difficult.

Not that Captain Jack meant to "let it go at that," if he could help it. He even figured out a combination play, which might succeed if Rel could be coaxed a little to one side. For a beginning, he started to play off — But then the whistle blew, and the match and the series were ended.

Score, 2 to 1 — in favour of Lorimer's team.

Rel Webb came up, trying to smile and look pleasant.

"I don't know but we ought to try this game over again, Lorimer," he said. "Perhaps you don't realize that we on this side were blinded, toward the end of it. Rather an unfair advantage for you, don't you think?"

Captain Jack choked down some harsh words.

"No," he said quietly, "I don't think. Between halves I offered you another chance. You wouldn't have it, then. I won't have it, now. This game stands. The series is over!"

He turned on his heel, and skated away.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SANTA CLAUS LANARD IN DANGER

"Some time this Wednesday afternoon or evening we ought to settle that business of the school hockey team," said Tom Bell. "Several of the fellows will be going away in vacation, and probably before they go they'd like to know where they're at."

"Better get the crowd together between the shows," Captain Jack answered. "That is, provided this afternoon surprise the girls have rigged up doesn't knock us out!"

They had reached the door of the gymnasium as he spoke; and with the words he opened it upon a pretty sight.

Across the farther end of the room stretched a big curtain, and what was behind that they knew not. But everywhere else, on walls and beams and fixtures, was Christmas greenery, evergreen and holly, giving even to stiff and business-like apparatus something of a holiday air.

If Jack and Tom wondered how the fellows were to do their evening stunts without mussing up the decorations, they were too polite to speak of it.

And there was not much chance, just then, for, before they were fairly inside, Nora McGrady met them and led them up in front of the mysterious curtain.

"Officers of the club, here," she said, nodding at their neighbours — Hans Anderson, the vice-president; Ryerson Legate of DeArmond's preparatory school, the secretary and treasurer; Oscar Stacy, the sergeant-at-arms, and Terry McGrady and Jenks Dawson, members of the executive committee. This lordly group sat somewhat apart from the other guests, members and friends of the club, and the fellows thus put at the front looked a little lonesome.

"Sure, I'd rather be out back with the common folks!" Terry McGrady whispered. "Let alone my natural modesty, I'm afraid I've not been a very good boy this year, and 'tis likely there's a bundle of rods for me on that Christmas tree!"

"Mains is the lucky one," Oscar Stacy muttered. "He bein' in charge of the place, he can circulate around. I'm so used to bein' on the go myself that it's hard work for me to sit still." He heaved his big shoulders and stretched his arms and cast a mournful smile at the girl he had left behind him in the middle of the hall.

"Any dancing in this?" Legate inquired, with a glance at the polished floor.

"Not on the programme for the afternoon," Captain Jack answered; "though," he added with

a smile, "the girls will probably make us want to hop!"

But just then the curtain drew aside, revealing the Christmas tree, which spoke for itself, and May Roxton, who "spoke a piece" about the club — a little poem full of good-natured hits and digs at the athletes who

> "Never would fail to reach the goal,
> Except when ma wanted a hod of coal,"

and the gymnasium that

> "Represented of talk a lot,
> And all the money their friends had got,"

and ended with the playful threat that, since the girls were not permitted to join the club they had worked so hard for, they would organize a club of their own, challenge the fellows to a meet,

> "And then, by winning all the events,
> Make the M. A. C. look like 30 cents!"

It was no masterpiece, but it was bright and catchy, and May's eyes and lips and voice carried their own fascination. The audience applauded hard and asked for more. But May shook her head, smilingly, and called out a dozen girls in gymnasium dress.

They went through a broom drill — no novelty, but seldom given with so much snap. Then Clare

Bell and Rose Ahearn came on for a fencing bout, and set everybody wild again. And more talk followed, a little speech by Mrs. DeArmond, wife of the head of the preparatory school, who, on behalf of the ladies of Millvale, congratulated the fellows and pledged their " mothers and aunts, near and distant," to help the club.

Mrs. DeArmond concluded. May waved her hand toward a make-believe chimney at the back of the platform, surmounting a fireplace in which was set a gas log.

" I suppose," she said, " that you gentlemen have ceased to hang up your stockings at Christmas time. Haven't you? Perhaps you have even outgrown your belief in Santa Claus. Have you?

" But a Christmas without Santa Claus is no Christmas at all, and as friends of yours we have taken considerable pains to get him here to-day. He is well-disposed toward you all, even though you may have snubbed him, and I understand that he has provided some little gift for every gentleman present.

" Gentlemen — ladies and gentlemen — I have the honour to introduce everybody's friend, Santa Claus! "

It was old Seth Lanard, in the usual Christmas rig, covered with cotton to represent fur, who stepped down into the fireplace, out of the make-believe chimney, reached up the chimney to get his bag, and then came forward to the front.

"Good day to ye, and merry Christmas!" he began. "I'm a good deal of an athlete, myself. Talk about your ground-gainers, I cal'late Santa Claus covers more ground than any man in the business! Had to come here, though! These girls seemed to think I hadn't anything too good for ye!"

He kept on a minute or two with shrewd, homespun talk about the club and the holiday, talk that was full of sense and bristled with good advice put in a way to "stick." Meanwhile Mains was quietly busy about the platform. He lighted the gas log, and the little fireplace shone out cheerfully.

"Don't know's all my presents 'll please you," Santa Claus went on, as he dived into his bag. "Tell ye one thing, though, you mustn't get mad at 'em! Santa Claus likes his joke as well as other folks!

"Jack Lorimer!" he called, and one of the girl ushers took the "present" he fished out, and handed it solemnly to Captain Jack. It was marked "Picture of the cash capital remaining in Millvale when Lorimer finished his canvass for the gymnasium," and it was — a pen-and-ink drawing of a cent.

"Jenks Dawson!" Another girl brought Dawson a small bronze hammer. His schoolfellows roared. Dawson was a good deal of a fault-finder, though he never "knocked" in a mean or sneaking way.

Thus Santa kept drawing from his bag small arti-

cles that bore down on the fellows' fads or their little weaknesses. Most of the hits were straight from the shoulder, but there were none calculated to hurt a fellow's feelings, and since everybody was getting a share, everybody took it pleasantly.

The bag was emptied at length amidst great laughter, and Santa Claus turned to the tree. He did not seem to notice, nor did the others, that one of the openings in the gas log had somehow split across, and a good-sized jet of flame was spurting up.

But as he stepped back and across the platform, one of those cotton-covered coat-tails of his switched over it. Next instant, flashing up like tinder, the coat was all ablaze.

"Oh! Oh! He's burning up!" somebody screamed.

"Jack! Ben! Help!" the old man cried.

Somehow he could not seem to throw off the coat. Desperately he tugged at the blazing fabric, but unsuccessfully, while women shrieked and half the audience rose in sudden panic.

Only for an instant, though it seemed a long time and filled with fearful peril. Then with one leap Captain Jack reached the little platform.

"Down! Drop down!" he cried. Quicker than it takes to tell it he had thrown the old man to the floor, rolled him in his own coat, and with fierce energy was crushing out the flames.

Mains ran up with a bucket of water, but it was

not needed. Gasping and trembling from the shock, but practically unharmed, the old man struggled out from under what was left of Captain Jack's coat.

"I'm — all — right — but — upsot!" he muttered, as Jack assisted him from the platform and set him down in a big chair.

"Hadn't I better help you home, so you can take a rest?" Lorimer asked.

"Ain't a-goin'!" The old man's voice was weak, but his courage was good as ever. "Somebody else 'll have to finish playin' Santa Claus, but I ain't a-goin' home, by gum!"

He stuck to that, and while May Roxton, with Mains's assistance, took the gifts from the tree — real gifts, these were — he professed to be as much interested as anybody, and when the girls served their simple refreshments he pretended to enjoy his share.

But he had been pretty badly shaken up, and when the little festival was over and Captain Jack volunteered to "go with Ben and see that they found the way home," the old man seemed glad to start.

"I'm all right, but I'm upsot," he admitted. "I'm thinkin' what would 'a' become o' me if you hadn't been here!"

CHAPTER XLV.

LORIMER'S LUCK — AND HIS DESERTS

It was five o'clock when Captain Jack left the gymnasium, and it was pretty near seven when he managed to get back. Old man Lanard had "hung on like a good fellow." He wanted to talk about anything and everything, to keep his mind off the danger he had so narrowly escaped, and it was hard work for Lorimer and Ben Cashman to break away.

All the rest of the twenty-one fellows who had played on the three hockey teams were already gathered in a corner of the gym, and when Jack and Ben appeared, Tom Bell got right to business.

"The understanding was," he said, "that at the end of the practice games we should choose the school team and its captain from our own number. We are now about to do so.

"The six games have given us a pretty good chance to size up each other's work, and there is no reason why the choice should be difficult or embarrassing. It's simply, in each case, to name the best of the men who played the position.

"For instance," Tom added, with a smile, "if

I thought I was the best of the left wings, I should vote for myself for left wing of the school team. If I didn't think so, I should vote for Chapin or Bussey, as the case might be. I wouldn't vote for a fellow because he was my chum; I would vote for one I didn't like, if I thought he was the strongest and safest man.

"To make a beginning, I'll ask McGrady to distribute these slips of paper, and each of you to write your choice for goal-keeper. Harriott and Reed and Amos have been playing that position. Vote for one."

Five minutes later, Chapin and Webb, appointed a committee to receive and count ballots, announced that Harriott had eighteen votes, Reed two, and Amos one.

"You have elected Harriott," said Tom Bell. "We will now vote for point, choosing between Scott, Janvrin, and McGrady."

So they went through the list. In two cases it took a second ballot to give any man a majority, since for right centre it was not easy to choose between Mossin and Collins and York; and for left wing Chapin and Bussey had admirers, as well as Bell. But finally the school team stood complete, as follows:

Goal	Harriott
Point	McGrady
Cover point	Lorimer
Right centre	York

Right wing	White
Left wing	Bell
Left centre	Bacon

"Now, for the captain of the team," Tom Bell went on. "Nominate, or vote without it, just as you prefer." He waited a moment. Nobody spoke. Probably every one took the result for granted. He signed to McGrady to deliver the slips, and a minute later Chapin announced:

"Lorimer, nineteen; Webb, one; Cashman, one." A storm of hand-clapping arose. It was Captain Jack, himself, who stilled it.

"I thank you, fellows," he said. "I'll do my best. I don't like to think, though, that fourteen men, good men at that, are out of the game just because there are too many of us, and I move that we request President Bell to name two substitute teams and make up a schedule that'll keep them busy playing matches — and winning victories!"

That was agreed to. It must have made Webb and Cashman feel better, since it promised them a chance to keep on figuring as captains; and, of course, there was some consolation in it for the fellows who had failed to make the team. As the meeting broke up, it seemed to have left behind some disappointment, but little or no bitterness.

Already the members of the athletic club, especially those who were to take part in the evening's entertainment, were gathering. Of course, they all had to shake hands with Captain Jack. Then every-

body appointed himself one of the reception committee, and tried to do something to make the guests of the club feel at home.

There was one unexpected arrival, who did not need to be told that he was welcome — all the more welcome, perhaps, because nobody had dreamed of seeing him again that night. That was old Seth Lanard?

"Couldn't stay away, by gum!" he roared, as he encountered Captain Jack. "Got to thinkin' about this 'ere shindig, after you and Ben left, and I knew I'd hate myself for the rest of my life if I missed it, so I jest hypered into my overcoat and told Pat to hitch up, and here I be — all ready to holler every time anybody does suthin!"

"Oh, there won't be anything to stretch your lungs over," laughed Lorimer. "Just a simple little exhibition. Indian club and flying rings drills, and that sort of thing. What we want to-night, you know, is to give our friends a chance to see the place and make them understand we'll always be glad to see them again."

"I cal'late your show'll be a success, jest the same!" the old man responded, nodding his head confidently.

So, indeed, it was, "even to the ground and lofty oratory," as Terry McGrady mischievously said to Captain Jack. For Lorimer had to make a speech, as May Roxton had predicted — and it was a good speech, too.

But the most interesting feature of the evening, to the friends of the young leader, would have been a little interlude that passed near the close, when Rel Webb and his father turned at the doorway for a last look across the floor.

Only time would reveal whether Rel meant to "go straight" for the future. To be sure he had behaved fairly well through the hockey season; and if to-night he had been miffed at the election that left him off the school team and made Lorimer its captain, he had concealed his feelings.

Yet there was mean and bitter envy, the root of all the vices, in his tone, as he swept his hand around — at the gymnasium which Lorimer practically had built; at the leaders of the city's business and professional and social life, assembled to do him honour; at Captain Jack himself, the centre of a group of loyal and admiring friends.

"Lorimer luck!" he muttered.

"Lorimer luck!" repeated Webb, the elder.

But Mr. Roxton, May's father, caught that, and he would not let it pass.

"Nonsense, Webb!" he said, sharply. "Not luck — it's pluck and hard work and fair dealing that have brought about all this! What do you say, Lanard?"

Old Seth Lanard wanted to say something loud and violent. That was shown by the look he gave the Webbs. But he held himself in pretty well.

"Luck, eh?" he snorted. "Luck means to have

things comin' your way, doesn't it? Cap'n Jack has gener'ly won his victories when things have been goin' ag'in' him!

"But if you'd ask me who deserved to have luck, I'd say, the feller who's patient and brave and cheerful; lives a clean life, and never misses a chance to help somebody else; won't lie or cheat, or try to take advantage; doesn't whine when he gets beaten, but keeps right on doin' his level best — that's Jack Lorimer!"

THE END.

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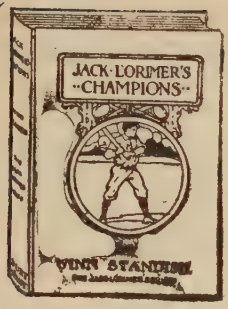

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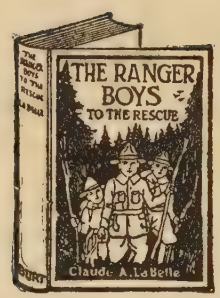

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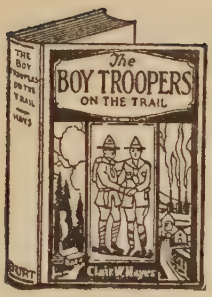

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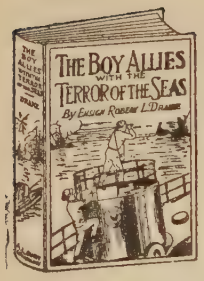

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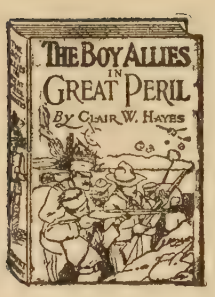

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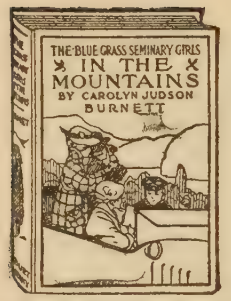

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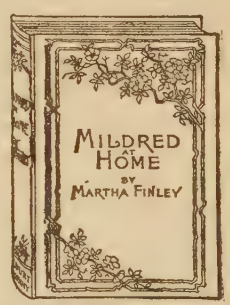

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